RURAL DIMENSIONS OF PLACE-COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE AND WELL-BEING

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DEDICATION

"A ***mother*** is someone who dreams great dreams for you, but then she lets you chase the dreams you have for yourself and loves you just the same."

Anonymous

"My ***father*** didn't tell me how to live; he lived, and let me watch him do it."

Clarence B. Kelland

Mark Tidd

"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.
Live the life you have imagined."

Thoreau Excerpt from Personal Journal

ABSTRACT

Building upon the ideas of decoupling and convergence, this thesis explores the structure of place-based community experience and levels of well-being for rural residents in southern Alberta. The research objectives are to: 1) measure and identify the experiential character of rural communities within the Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains of community social life, and to understand the structure and complexity of this experience; 2) assess the aggregate differences in the intensity of these experiential structures by degree of rurality as represented by Metropolitan Influenced Zones (MIZs); and 3) model the extent to which these dimensions may account for differences in well-being. Sixteen unique dimensions of variation in rural community experience are identified – partially supporting convergence – and almost no differences are found in the intensity of these dimensions by degree of rurality (MIZs). The findings show a subset of experiential dimensions to be significant predictors of well-being in rural people.

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Introduction

1.1 Contextual and Theoretical Foundations

Many argue that there have been profound changes in the way in which people engage one another in postmodern societies, and that these changes have significant implications for individual quality of life and collective social well-being. There are both pessimistic and optimistic views of such change. Pessimists point to the breakdown of institutions such as marriage and the family, the pursuit of self-fulfillment at the expense of social cohesion, the breakdown of community bonds within cities and rural areas, and increasing levels of social polarization (Lasch 1979; Taylor 1991; Tinder 1980; Tuan 1995; Keller 1988). Furthermore, following the publication of Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), many of these themes have been re-packaged within the emerging discourse on *social capital*.

Optimistic views suggest the individuality of post-modernity is a "moral ideal" in the creation of authentic cultures and a prerequisite for the strengthening of communal bonds (Taylor 1991). Yet it has also been established that in both urban and rural contexts, strong social networks and bonds of community can still be found (Wellman & Berkowitz 1988), so perhaps claims of the demise of community are premature. The social capital literature is essentially optimistic, recognizing that the pursuit of community has both individual and collective societal benefits (Bauman 2000; Howitt 2002; Sampson 2003; Lochner et al. 1999; Subramanian et al. 2003; Hawe & Shiell 2000).

Despite renewed interest in the importance of community in people's lives, the geographical dimensions of community have not been extensively studied. Recent attempts have been made to understand the geographical variation in various structures of community within cities, and it has been shown that numerous experiential dimensions of *place-based community* can be empirically identified within cities (Townshend 2002a, 2002b; Townshend 2001; Townshend & Davies 1999; Davies et al. 1999). These dimensions, which span a range of behavioral, cognitive and affective features, vary considerably in their intensity and representation across neighborhoods, illustrating that there are important *experiential topographies* that characterize the places in which people live (Townshend 2002a). Moreover, these kinds of place-based differences, which include many of the key constructs of social capital formation, are not trivial. In cities it has been shown that a number of these features are significantly linked to both individual and collective psychological well-being. In short, place-based interactions and experiences do matter.

1.2 The Knowledge Gap and Objectives of the Study

To date, very little is known about how these emotive structures or experiential features of community are manifest within rural areas, whether rural areas and communities differ significantly in their intensity and expression of these features, or whether or not community-based social interactions and emotions of community are still important predictors of well-being in rural settings. This thesis builds upon a number of theoretical perspectives that suggest that place-based community experience in rural areas may have changed significantly as a result of agro-industrialization, and that there may be

a type of social convergence taking place, such that rural social life is seen to be becoming increasingly similar to that of urban social life.

This thesis is an exploratory analysis of these ideas of community and well-being in rural areas in southern Alberta. Drawing upon a similar methodology used to investigate community and well-being in the urban communities of Lethbridge, there are three main objectives to this study: 1) To empirically measure and identify the experiential character of place-based rural communities and to understand the structure and complexity of this experience; 2) To assess if there are aggregate differences in the intensity or manifestation of these experiential structures by degree of metropolitan influence (i.e. degree of rurality); and 3) To model the extent to which these dimensions of community-based social experience can account for differences in well-being amongst rural residents.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

Given the complexity, diversity and interdisciplinary ideas that form the basis for this study, the literature review and conceptual basis of the thesis is developed over a number of distinct chapters.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature and relationships between the major concepts that pertain to structural changes in rural society and the ways in which rural social and community life may be becoming more urban-like. It attempts to establish how ideas like the *decoupling* of rural economic production functions and community bonds (Smithers et al. 2005), in part a function of agro-industrialization (Smithers et al. 2004; Troughton 1995, 1999; Donnermeyer & Barclay 2005; Friedland 2002), may be associated with the temporal trend towards *convergence* in urban and rural lifestyles, and

hence convergence or increasing similarities in the nature of place-community experiences in the city and countryside. Chapter 2 also provides a review of the conceptual and definitional problem of rural and rurality when dealing with such concepts, and shows how differing degrees of urban influence or rurality must be considered when studying rural social phenomena such as community and well-being. Chapter 2 concludes with a description and explanation of a model of place-community differentiation that is adopted in this study. This model recognizes that the experiential structure of community is not unidimensional but multi-dimensional, and shows how community, and social differences within communities, may be conceptualized as unique structures, dimensions or elements associated with behavioral, cognitive and affective features of social life.

The topic of "community" is complex and multifaceted, and there are literally thousands of books and academic studies of community in the social sciences and humanities. This thesis does not aim to revisit all of these ideas or debates. But the topic, particularly from the perspective of urban or rural geography, is sufficiently complex to warrant a separate literature review of *rural perspectives on community*. Following the logic and elements contained in the model of place-community differentiation described in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 is a systematic review of the disparate rural studies literature from many different disciplines. The review is specifically organized around the key ideas of the conceptual community model, and aims to show how the extant rural community studies are linked to these concepts. The review also integrates a number of perspectives from the burgeoning social capital literature, to show how many of these

seemingly new ideas are integrated with or subsumed within the ideas contained in the model of community differentiation.

Chapter 4 describes the study area, data and methodology for the empirical part of the study. It outlines the development of a rural-oriented survey instrument designed to tap into the place-community ideas and measurement of well-being, and the way in which a set of indicator variables was derived from the survey data. The multivariate methodology used to explore the structural character of Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains of rural experience is described, as is the method used to investigate differences in community experience by degree of rurality, and the method for assessing the contribution of community experience to levels of well-being.

A detailed analysis and interpretation of the empirical results and their substantive linkage to the theoretical and conceptual basis of the thesis is carried out in Chapter 5. In particular, the strong structural similarity with previous urban studies of this kind suggests that the community model is rather robust in both urban and rural settings—and seems to reinforce the convergence thesis. The discussion also draws attention to potential problems or limitations with official classifications of rurality such as the Metropolitan Influence Zone (MIZ) concept, because the findings show that in a social *experiential community* sense, rural residents seem to be undifferentiated.

Chapter 6 provides concluding remarks, outlines some future directions for research and speculates on some of the challenges for rural social geographers implied from this study.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Linkages:

Structural Change, Rurality, Community, and Well-Being

2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the conceptual and theoretical background of the thesis. It aims to situate the study within the context of structural changes in rural life and economy, the problem of defining rural, the importance of community as a territorial or geographical focus of rural life, and the potential links between community-based social interactions and levels of well-being. As well, with regard to the concept of well-being, the last section of this chapter provides an overview of the rural studies literature concerning levels and changes in well-being and the possible links to rural community life.

2.2 Structural Change in Rural Economy and Society:

Decoupling and Convergence

There is little doubt that there has been significant change in the nature of rural society in Canada since the mid-twentieth century. This change can be linked to changes in technology, farming practices, rapid rural-urban migration, the urbanization of the countryside, and changes in the linkage between rural production and the settlement system. In terms of the objectives of this study, a review of these changes points to two important and related trends: 1) the *decoupling* of rural farm economic functions from local community life, and 2) the trend towards a demise of rural distinctiveness in social

experience and hence a *convergence* of rural and urban lifestyles and social experience. These trends are graphically summarized in Figure 2.1.

2.2.1 Decoupling

Numerous studies have pointed to the significant transformations in the nature and economic organization of agricultural production systems in Canada since the 1950s, which Troughton (1995) argues was the start of the first major wave of structural change. Others have summarized these changes as they pertain to three key factors: intensification, concentration and specialization (Parson 1999). Farming has become much more *intensified*, in the sense of an increased use of off-farm inputs to production. Hence, machinery, chemicals and the adoption of new technological practices have led to higher capital inputs, which have increased output yields. The increasing need to be competitive in an era of high capital costs of farming has also meant that farming has become more competitive. Small operators who cannot make the capital from labor substitutions required to compete are not always viable, and so agricultural production has become increasingly *concentrated* in the hands of fewer farmers operating larger more capital-intensive farms. These operations must maximize their competitive position and allocation of capital to those products yielding the greatest comparative advantage, leading to increasing *specialization* and reduction in diversity of production at the farm level (Parson 1999). Together, these factors have contributed towards the increasing industrialization of farming and a rise of agribusiness. This has also led to what many consider to be a decoupling of agricultural production from the local community context.

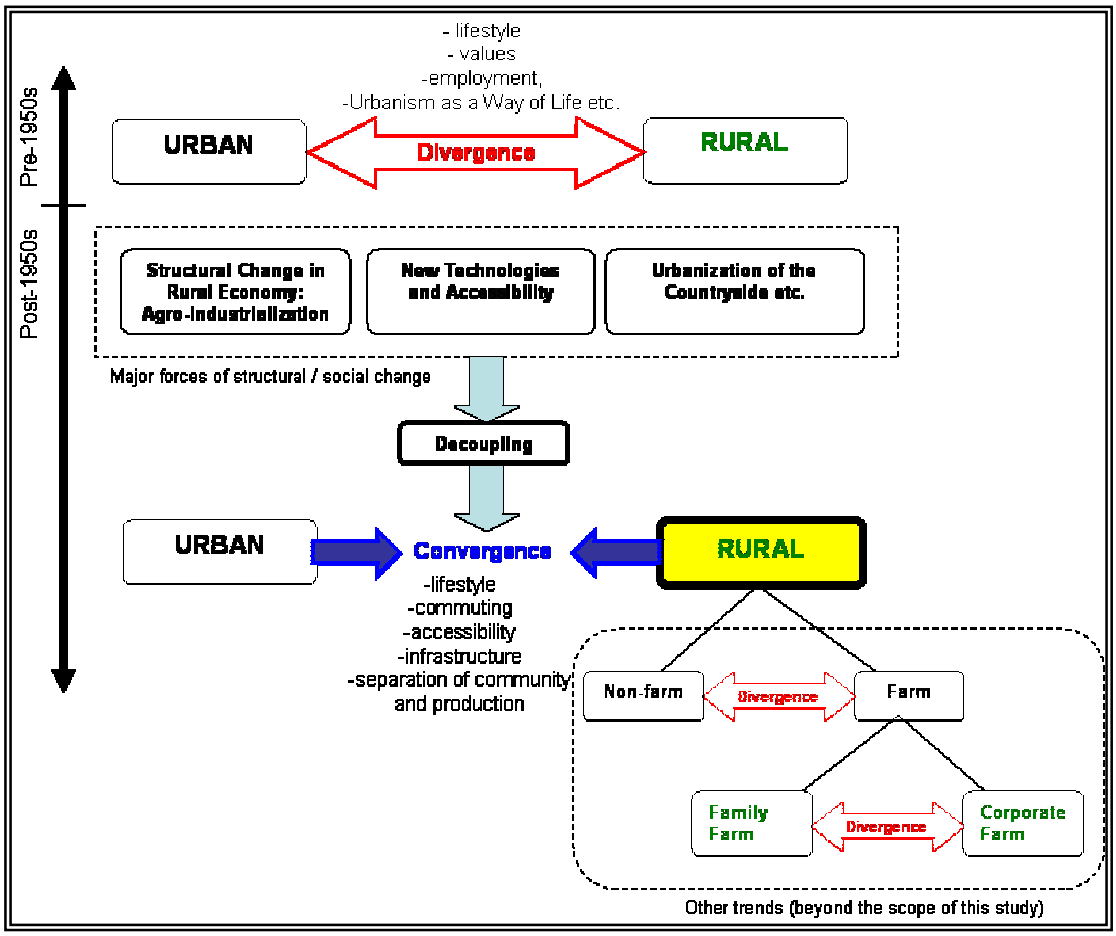

Figure 2.1 **Divergence & Convergence of Rural Community Social Life/Interaction**

Historically, rural communities and hence rural community social life, were seen to be inextricably linked to the productive sphere since agricultural production was predominantly centered around the family farm with a strong reliance on the local town or service center. Farmers were seen to rely on towns for material inputs and service provision, and rural settlements were seen to be socially and economically oriented towards the support of agriculture (Smithers et al. 2005). It has recently been suggested however, that structural changes in agricultural production practices, and specifically the intensification of agriculture and trend towards agro-industrialization, may have begun to sever this close link between farm family life and local community life. In Canada, the

economic and social 'decoupling' of agriculture from rural community life has recently received attention from a number of students of rural community (Smithers et al. 2005; Cummings et al. 1999; Joseph et al. 2001; Smithers & Johnson 2004; Troughton 1995, 1999). Smithers et al. (2005, p281) note that:

> "Manifestations of this alleged 'decoupling' include instances of simple disengagement and disinterest (e.g. low public awareness of the poor economics of farming, declining volunteerism), mutual mistrust (e.g. consumer concerns for food quality, farm demands for protection from nuisance litigation), and confrontation and conflict (e.g. the siting of intensive livestock facilities, farm resistance to environmental regulation)."

The idea that rural towns and community life no longer function as a primary support for small-scale agricultural production implies that social life in these places has also changed. A number of studies have empirically documented perceptions of social change associated with decoupling, but have also shown that decoupling is a relative concept (Smithers & Johnson 2004; Smithers et al. 2004; Troughton 1995; Bryant & Joseph 2001; Meares 1997; Reimer 2004a). However, an underlying theme in much of the decoupling argument is that the kinds of social engagement and kinds of social interactions of small town rural residents are less centered on farming or farm people per se. This decreasing reference to farming and the economics of farming as an integral part of rural social exchange suggests that the experiences of place-based community social life in small towns may be becoming more like those found in urban neighborhoods. In short, *decoupling* is likely to contribute towards greater levels of rural-urban *convergence* in the *experiential structure* of place communities.

2.2.2 Social and Experiential Convergence of Rural and Urban Life

Although the changes in agricultural production systems may have led to a decoupling of farm and community life and hence contributed towards convergence, other types of social and spatial change have been recognized as part of this trend towards the potential convergence of rural and urban lifestyles.

Rural communities in the early 20th Century experienced relatively little change, but as the century progressed the rate of change accelerated as technology advanced and improved (Friedberger 1988). Innovations in technology often cause inadvertent social changes. For instance, two of the most powerful innovations that caused massive social change were the automobile and the television. The automobile made it relatively easy to travel great distances in a short period of time, thus reducing the friction of distance, increasing connectivity and truly making it a small world after all. This brought rural and urban environments much closer together. As well, television made it possible for all people to experience the same things, rural and urban dwellers alike were exposed to the same programming and advertising, resulting in a similar cultural foundation spread through the media.

However, while these social and cultural changes occur gradually over time they can result in substantial structural and behavioral transformations. For example, with these transformations came an alternative measure of success for individuals. Today, the success of a person's life is measured with material gains such as salary, the size of one's home and a financial portfolio. Conversely, some have argued that in the first part of the 20th Century the important factor in success was whether or not a person became a productive member of society (Friedberger 1988). The structural and behavioral

transformations that have taken place over the past century have added to the homogeneity of society and the receding divide between rural and urban life-styles. Even though there is much literature (e.g. Hamnett 1994,1996; van Kempen 1994) based on social polarization – especially of the rich and the poor in large urban centers – it would appear that the convergence in the *structure* of rural and urban social life has intensified as a result of the technological and social transformations that have occurred since WWII.

By the 1960s rural Canada was in the midst of radical change that led the rural system into a state of flux. Troughton (1995) argues, "the postwar period saw dynamic growth in Canadian rural areas near towns and cities, which became known as 'rural-urban fringe' zones" (p295). By the 1970s these 'rural-urban fringe' zones developed at exponential rates in response to employment, commuting patterns and land conversion (Troughton 1995). These fringe zones continued to change and agricultural diversification, as well as the social and political characteristics between the old and newcomer populations, became more and more evident over time (Bryant 1992; Bryant & Johnston 1992; Walker 1987, cited in Troughton 1995).

Newby (1980) argues that the greatest challenge to established structures of rural power comes from the social transformation that has overtaken rural areas in all advanced capitalist societies; such as the declining significance of agricultural employment and the arrival of an 'adventitious', mostly ex-urban population or rural 'newcomers'. He maintains that this shift in the demographics of rural areas has ultimately led to a rural society that is more urbanized, more middle class and less dependent upon agriculture for its economic activity. Furthermore, Newby (1980) claims that this change in the social composition of the rural population, along with the growth of *corporate farms* and the

decreasing autonomy of rural communities, has resulted in an increasing integration of rural and urban sectors in advanced industrialized societies.

Reimer (2005) agrees that a convergence of urban and rural social structure is taking place; economic and social changes have created very different conditions from those of the old industrial economy. For example, the *Fordist* mass production systems gave way to 'flexible' production and a 'just-in-time' reorganization of distribution (Reimer 2005). Persson et al. (1997, cited in Reimer 2005) identify this change as the *arena society*; a society that is more inclusive, diverse, complex, dynamic, and confusing in that transportation and communication costs have decreased so much that people interact with different networks for work, education and recreation which in turn implies the option of high personal mobility. Chaykowski (1997, cited in Reimer 2005) suggests that geographically based community systems have lost most of their coherence and new social, economic and institutional systems are more diverse and flexible as we enter the 21st Century. The arena society metaphor highlights the fact that people today have access to global opportunities. The agrarian society of the past concentrated home, work and leisure in the same place whereas the arena society of today is characterized by the fact that people live in one place, work in another and spend their spare time in yet another place. Reimer (2005) also identifies two elements of population growth important to the changing structure of the rural-urban continuum: first is the proximity to urban centers and second is the availability of natural amenities. He believes that both features foreshadow new elements in rural-urban relations such as changing commuting patterns and the growing importance of natural amenities for urban dwellers.

Despite a considerable convergence of rural and urban social structure, Reimer (2005) maintains that the two remain different in some fundamental respects. For example, isolation creates added costs to goods and services reducing opportunities for diversification in some rural sectors. As well, such issues as specialized and amalgamated health care cause far more problems in rural areas where residents may not have access to transportation and advanced age can be a problem when seeking health services. Reimer (2005, p94) concludes:

> "Rural and urban Canada are interdependent parts of the national and social whole. Their economies are interdependent, their institutions are most often the same, their cultures are intertwined, and their populations are intermixed. At the same time, there are, and will continue to be, important differences in this relationship. The particularities of location will ensure that most broad changes or policies have unique effects due to local organizations and culture. Continued urbanization will produce ghost towns, bedroom communities, playgrounds, industrial towns, manufacturing clusters, and retirement centers according to location, facilities, policy, services, population, and knowledge levels. One will always have to travel farther in rural than urban areas, just as one will continue to have access to a wider range of services in cities."

In summary, much of the literature emphasizes that the rural-urban distinction may have little relevance, particularly in terms of the role of place-communities in peoples lives. The rural 'community' as one in which social exchange is integrally linked to the agricultural production sector may be outmoded and rural people, with similar exposure to technologies and access to urban-like amenities, may be engaging in community activities and neighbor interactions that are increasingly similar to those living in urban neighborhoods. However, the simplistic dichotomous distinction between rural and urban must be challenged in this regard, because it is quite possible that convergence is a matter of degree, and potentially a function of the degree of rurality.

2.3 Conceptualizing and Defining Rural

The definition and measurement of urban and rural, and the delineation of related social and economic traits, has been at the core of sociological and geographical debates for almost two centuries. On the one hand, the terms *rural* and *urban* can be related to what the general public perceives as *country* and *city* based upon the size and density of population. Wirth (1938) postulated that "on the basis of three variables: number, density of settlement and degree of heterogeneity of the urban population, it appears possible to explain the characteristics of urban life of various sizes and types" (p18). By this very definition, rurality is assigned to all other regions. The paired terms, *urban-rural*, suggest a dichotomy or continuum involving (directly or indirectly) some kind of relationship to variations in size of community. Wirth (1938) defined life in urban America using specific cultural ideas, values and actions of his time and place, which were universal for communities of comparable size and density. Dewey (1960) suggests that if one were to contrast the rural but wealthy farming communities of America today to pre-industrial cities, it would become clear that the characteristics of urban life as postulated by Wirth (1938) – the personality and social organization of cities – are now common in prosperous farming areas and scarce or nonexistent in many cities. However, it is not entirely logical to discount the universality of the urban-rural continuum in describing large metropolitan environments and sparsely settled regions. As Dewey (1960) states, the logic of custom and of the English language supports the retention of *rural* and *urban* to designate the extremes of the continuum defined by Wirth's five indicators: 1) anonymity, 2) division of labor, 3) heterogeneity, 4) impersonal and formally prescribed relationships, and 5) symbols of status which are independent of personal acquaintance.

Although each of these indicators may be culturally specific all can still be used to distinguish between *ruralism* and *urbanism*. Yet the question remains, have the lines blurred enough over the past fifty years for a type of 'cross-pollination' between the two, emphasizing an important lack of difference between urban and rural society? (Brown 1993)

The socially constructed dichotomy, or continuum, of the rural-urban debate must also recognize that such a discussion on "any functional definition will inevitably mask the complexities of over-lapping geographical, social and cultural spaces" (Cloke et al. 1997, p210). Cloke et al. (1997) maintain there is no longer one single rural space, but rather a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area. In the past, rural was linked to countryside and the physical aspects of the landscape. However, "it is no longer possible to identify rural space as non-urban space since spatial divergence is no longer evident as urban areas have bled into the countryside" (Lefebvre 1991, cited in d'Hauteserre 2001, p410). Wirth (1938) also acknowledged that the characterization of a community as urban on the basis of size alone was obviously arbitrary. Sorokin and Zimmerman (1929, cited in Theodori & Luloff 2000) agreed that a definition of rural and urban could not be based solely on the size of community, density of population or even census definitions. Theodori and Luloff (2000) note that many agree with the argument that any adequate definition of rural and urban must include several traits, which implies that the terms themselves are not describable by any individual characteristic.

Furthermore, Harrington and O'Donoghue (1998) replicated a study by Cloke and Edwards (1986) with regards to an index of rurality in England and Wales. Harrington and O'Donoghue (1998) defined not one, but two, rural indices – the structural index and

the demographic index – to establish changes in the degree of rurality over a ten year period. “Through use of these indices, different aspects of ruralness were explored representing different dimensions which often held distinct geographical patterns” (Harrington & O’Donoghue 1998, p193). The findings of this study support the construct of multi-dimensional rural space; as well as further helping to understand the complex and dynamic nature – and measurement of – rural space and the differing degrees of rurality in the world today.

Geography appears to be in the midst of reinterpreting the rural. Today the average urban person thinks of rural as the regions beyond the suburbs, where one goes to escape the *urban rat race* (Akerlof 1976). Rural is idealized as a land of hills, mountains, trees, lakes, and other stereotypical natural beauty, it is a place to be visited and admired. “The rural is imagined as a spatial and temporal retreat from the urban environs, a place close to nature, rich in community ties, where life is lived at a slower pace in settlements situated amidst idyllic, nostalgic settings” (Hopkins 1998, p78). Typically, urban residents know little of traditional rural culture or heritage, even though they may be only a generation or two removed from those rural roots. Visiting family in rural areas or admiring rural landscapes during summer vacations does not expose one to the underlying culture of rural people. Living on acreages adjacent to metropolitan areas also belies a true rural lifestyle since the life these residents lead still takes place in the city. “Rurality, like other forms of representation and thus of identification, is a social construction the components of which are generally negotiated at the local scale and closely linked to the concept of [the] rural idyll” (d’Hauteserre 2001, p412). Furthermore, Atkin (2003) argues that rural traditions and conservative values are a key characteristic

of rurality that perpetuate firmly held views of behavior, that in turn are catalysts for a sense of security and stability as well as a clear guidance of right and wrong.

But the interpretation and definition of rural must go beyond conceptual, theoretical or subjective traits. The systematic study of rural spaces as opposed to urban spaces necessitates the adoption of operationalized working definitions. International organizations as well as national statistical organizations must adopt some working definition; although in many cases multiple definitions of rural may be adopted, depending on the objectives of analysis.

Such is the case in Canada, where multiple definitions are used for a variety of types of analysis. The formal definition used by Statistics Canada for the 2001 Canadian Census states that an "urban population refers to everyone in an area with a population of at least 1,000 and no fewer than 400 persons per square kilometer. The rural population includes everyone living outside centers with a population of 1,000 or more and the building blocks for classifying geographic space as *rural* include all those people living in and outside the rural fringes of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations" (Census Dictionary 2001). However, this definition is based solely on the size and density of population and does not reflect the behavior or culture of people in general. In essence, this is a simplistic dichotomous definition: that all of Canadian space (and population) is either urban or rural – meaning that rural is, by definition, simply not urban.

It has increasingly been recognized that this binary definition is not always suitable, as it does not capture differences in varying degrees of rurality nor the influence of small towns on rural experience. Alternate definitions are frequently used in which small urban

places and their surrounding hinterlands form a basis for the definition of rural. This definition of 'Rural and Small Town' (RST) is now one of the most commonly used operational definitions of rural for social research in Canada. Ryan-Nicholls and Racher (2004), point out that the Canadian Census definition of non-metropolitan areas is the definition of rural most commonly used in studies of rural Canada. Furthermore, rather than using only one existing definition for rural, du Plessis et al. (2001) cross-classified two Statistics Canada definitions in order to obtain four distinct categories of individuals (Table 2.1). Two groups are within the larger urban center (LUC) and two are within the rural and small town (RST) sector.

Table 2.1 du Plessis Rural Classification Table

Definition	Cross-Classification	Main Criteria
LUC Urban	Census Urban and CMA/CA	Individuals live in the urban core of larger urban centers (population 10,000 or more) or in small towns (population 1,000-9,999) within commuting zones of larger urban centers
LUC Rural	Census Rural and CMA/CA	Individuals live in countryside within commuting zone of larger urban centers
RST Small Town	Census Urban and RST	Individuals live in small towns (1,000-9,000) outside commuting zone of larger urban center
RST Rural	Census Rural and RST	Individuals live in country side outside commuting zone of larger urban centers

Source: Abridged from du Plessis et al. (2001) "Definitions of Rural" *Rural and Small Town Analysis Bulletin,* 3(3): 1-17

du Plessis et al. (2001) show that by cross-tabulating any two rural definitions, analysts can focus on a certain subgroup of rural residents and the characteristics of individuals within each subgroup. In and of itself, this type of alternative classification reflects the dynamic nature of any definition for rurality as well as the important relationship that exists between rural and urban areas. The fact that either area is defined with respect to the other provides evidence of the 'complexity' and 'intertwining' of the two sectors (du Plessis et al. 2001). Moreover, an assumption can be made that small towns may have more in common with urban areas than they do with rural ones. As Li et

al. (2005) discovered, people's definitions of their neighborhoods or communities did not necessarily conform to any census boundaries or any other objective measures.

The RST definition essentially defines rural Canada as both the small towns and rural spaces outside of metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, and so for the most part includes towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000 as well as their surrounding hinterlands. However, 2001 Statistics Canada also sought to differentiate these RST spaces according to the degree of metropolitan area or census agglomeration influence – in other words, to define degrees of rurality of RST Canada according to Metropolitan Influenced Zones (MIZs). McNiven et al. (2000) have provided detailed discussion of the evolution of the MIZ concept and classification structure in terms of concepts such as flows, distance, adjacency, and accessibility. Essentially, all Census Subdivisions (CSDs) in Canada are assigned to an MIZ class based on the influence of large cities in terms of commuting patterns or place of work-flows to one or more metropolitan areas or census agglomerations. The basic classification structure is summarized in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Metropolitan Influenced Zone Classification Structure

MIZ Class	CSD Classification	RST Linkage	Place of Work-flows (to one or more CMAs/CAs)
1	Census Metropolitan Area	"Urban"	
2	Census Agglomeration (tracted)	"Urban"	
3	Census Agglomeration (untracted)	"Urban"	
4	Strong MIZ (Strongly Influenced Zone)	"Rural" (as per RST)	30.0%-49.0%
5	Moderate MIZ (Moderate Influenced Zone)	"Rural" (as per RST)	5.0%-29.9%
6	Weak MIZ (Weak Influenced Zone)	"Rural" (as per RST)	0.1%-4.9%
7	No MIZ (Not Influenced Zone)	"Rural" (as per RST)	0.0%
8	Territories (The North)	"Rural" (The North)	

It should be emphasized that the MIZ classification of CSDs can be based on the degree of influence from many census metropolitan areas or census agglomerations, not just the most proximate. This new MIZ classification provides a consistent operationalization of RST Canada according to differing degrees of rurality, and "…fills a gap in Statistics Canada's geographic framework and promotes data based on the same geographic structure" (McNiven et al. 2000, p10). This typology therefore provides a more useful continuum definition rather than the overly simplistic dichotomy of rural vs. urban.

2.4 The Concept of Community

It has been suggested that a number of forces of structural change in rural society may have led to a type of rural-urban convergence in the experience of place-based community social life. It has also been suggested by the recent establishment of the MIZ typology that differing degrees of rurality, or conversely, differing degrees of metropolitan influence, may be important ways in which rural space is differentiated in Canada today. This also necessitates a consideration of the concept of community, and the types of social experience that may give rise to differences in the structures of these communities.

The notion of community has been a platform for discussion among researchers for a long time. In Hillery's famous 1955 study, he examined 94 definitions of community in order to determine what a minimum requirement may be for a general meaning of the concept. Ultimately, he discovered that the foundation of a universal definition of community comprised three common characteristics; there was "basic agreement that

community consists of persons in social interaction within a geographic area and having one or more additional common ties" (Hillery 1955, p111). Hillery's (1955) study substantiated that approximately three quarters of the definitions of community have at least two of the characteristics stated above: 1) community is considered to be a group of people in some kind of social interaction and 2) those people have some kind of common bond. Hillery (1955) also maintained that the majority of definitions included three main elements (in order of importance): social interaction, common bonds and area. He also suggested that community is a phenomenon that may be more recognizable in rural areas because urban communities are much larger social units resulting in more heterogeneity of the population and the complexity of these regions may "obscure the fundamental basis upon which community rests" (Hillery 1955, p119).

The word 'community' is used by different people to mean different things. Most often it is used to describe a place or geographical space, but it is also used to describe a group of people who are interested in the same things but may be located in very different areas. For this research, community will identify a place where people know each other and interact to achieve common goals. This definition corresponds to Ryan-Nicholls and Racher (2004) who describe community as people within a geographically bounded area involved in social interaction and with one or more psychological ties with each other and the place they live. These communities are carefully constructed networks of interactions formed over time for the purpose of mutual aid and social support. These networks are referred to by some as *social capital* (Putnam 1993, 2000, 2001) but are also comparable to what others identify as an individuals' *sense of community* (McMillan & Chavis 1986).

At its core, a sense of community – or social capital – is a network of associated norms of reciprocity that have value (Putnam 2000; McMillan & Chavis 1986). Since the people in the network share that value both privately and publicly, McMillan and Chavis (1986) maintain that a sense of community is multi-dimensional and it has no single form. For instance, there are highly formal networks such as community organizations, as well as informal networks like people gathering at a neighborhood pub on a Friday afternoon. Yet both forms constitute networks where reciprocity can develop and be observed. Often these networks are highly intertwined, for example a group of teachers who work together may also play softball together once a week as well as attending the same church every Sunday. At the other end of the spectrum is a more transparent connection, such as nodding acquaintances between people in a grocery store. All forms of social networks play an important role in ones' sense of community – the structural characteristics of the community as well as the behavioral ones. Newby (1980) contends there has been a revival in the desire to create and/or re-create this sense of community in what has been termed an apparently de-humanizing and rapidly changing modern world. In addition, since the publication of *Bowling Alone* (Putnam 2000), there has been an explosion of interest in the ways in which a sense of community/social capital might be re-created within American society.

According to Hofferth and Iceland (1998), common ties established by networks are similar in urban and rural areas but do tend to have differing natures along several dimensions. They postulate that "the theoretical reasons for why rural and urban interpersonal relations may differ are as follows: dispersion and distance restrict opportunities for rural individuals; hence, this isolation compounded by lack of public

transportation, difficult weather conditions, heavy seasonal demands of farming and lesser availability of public services in rural areas increases the need for a greater sense of responsibility to others" (Hofferth & Iceland 1998, p577). Research also continues to show that "it is the length of residence, not the size of place, that is most closely associated with the extent to which individuals feel attached to their communities" (Goudy 1990; Sampson 1988, 1991, cited in Hofferth & Iceland 1998, p579). Therefore, one could speculate that the more stable, long-term residents of rural areas possess a stronger sense of community than the more transient populations we find in metropolitan areas.

However, Hofferth and Iceland (1998) found the evidence mixed. Stronger ties were not necessarily more characteristic of urban than rural or vice versa. Theodori and Luloff (2000) also found that although length of residence was an important factor in affecting community attachment, it was not statistically significant in determining higher or lower levels in either urban or rural areas, hence being unable to differentiate based upon that factor alone. These findings therefore suggest that the rural-urban distinction is breaking down – that there is a convergence in rural and urban social life such that rural or urban residential context does not relate to socio-spatial differences within sense of community or attachment (Theodori & Luloff 2000).

This discussion points to different ways in which to think about the concept of community and hints at a number of ways in which researchers speculate that the experiential character of rural and urban communities may be converging. But the fundamental problem with the community studies literature is that it has proved extremely difficult to define or operationalize community in all of its complexity for the

purposes of analysis. It would be useful to have a model of community and its constituent parts.

In this regard, recent work in the field of urban studies has attempted to go beyond the disparate definitions and classifications of community found in different disciplines. Building upon the community studies literature, early work by Davies and Herbert (1993) tried to show how, conceptually at least, numerous dimensions or elements of community differentiation could be identified in the literature. This conceptual framework was subsequently modified, operationalized, tested, and largely validated in a number of studies by Townshend (2001, 2002), although this work was limited to urban neighborhoods or communities.

This conceptual model of place-community differentiation has been described extensively elsewhere, but it is worth summarizing a few of the main attributes of the model. This model suggests that communities, i.e. place-based communities such as urban neighborhoods, and possibly even rural small towns and their hinterlands, can be differentiated according to multiple dimensions (or elements) associated with a number of different domains of social life. Table 2.3 provides a generalized and somewhat simplified schemata of this model.

Table 2.3 Conceptual Model of Place-Community Differentiation

Major Domains	Possible Distinctive Dimensions or Structures (others may also be found or identified)
Areal Content Domain (objective physical and social structural traits within communities)	• Area (i.e. size, distance, density) • Environment (i.e. climate, landforms, etc.) • Facilities and structures (i.e. shops, roads, leisure places) • Morphology (i.e. design types, styles, degrees of decay) • Social variety (i.e. social structure, economic & family status, ethnicity, mobility, etc.)
Behavioral Domain (activities and interactions)	• Facility use • Informal interactions • Mutual cooperative behaviors (supportive) • Organization involvement • Political participation • Supportive milieu (external support for community) • Economic/capital flows (i.e. flows into or out of community)
Cognitive Domain (understanding, interpretations)	• Place identity • Cognitive mapping • People identity (homogeneity/heterogeneity) • Symbolic communication (territorial marking)
Affective Domain (feelings, emotions, beliefs etc.)	• Symbolism of place • Sentiment and attachment • Evaluation and appraisal • Nuisances, annoyances • Safety and security • Empowerment • Place appearance • Latent involvement/participation • Aesthetics • Common values • Empathy and belonging (sense of community)
Time Domain (Variations in Areal Content, Behavior, Cognition, Affect through time)	• Short term • Episodic (i.e. seasonal, annual, etc.) • Long-term events
Space/Scale Domain (Variations in Areal Content, Behavior, Cognition, Affect according to different spatial scales or aggregation effects)	• Individuals • Households • Neighborhood, census tract, etc. • Districts • Degrees of urbanism/rurality, etc. • Urban vs rural etc.

Source: Abridged and modified from Davies and Herbert 1993:36, and Townshend and Davies 1999 and Townshend 2001.

The Areal Content domain is what differentiates communities in terms of the physical infrastructure, environmental traits and objective social structural traits (e.g. socioeconomic status) of the area. However, there are three other domains that span the experiential part of community social life.

The Behavioral domain conceptually comprises unique structures or elements of community variation associated with the behaviors and place-based activity patterns of human agents. It may include such features as neighboring, shopping, political participation, mutual exchange, and the deliberate promotion of social ties with influential people to foster a supportive milieu, etc.

The Cognitive domain includes potentially unique structures of community difference that pertain to peoples understanding and cognitive imagery of their place-community environment. It may include features such as the ability to map or interpret a residential area, the cognition of social homogeneity or heterogeneity within the community or the ability to perform basic landmark identification within the community environment.

The Affective domain comprises unique structures of community experience that differentiate people in terms of their emotional connections with their residential environment and their neighbors. These types of features may be similar to what Anderson and Smith (2001) have more recently referred to as the 'emotive topographies' of social life. But these features have long been identified in the community studies literature, and are most usually represented by such traits as psychological sense of community, a sense of safety and security, a sense of cohesion or group solidarity, a sense of rootedness in a place-community, and so on.

The model shown in Table 2.3 is not intended to be static. In fact, the model recognizes that all the different types of features – including the experiential behavioral, cognitive and affective features – are 'fluid' or dynamic. Thus, all of these various structures are conceptually capable of varying or transforming themselves through time.

The Time domain shows that some of these types of changes may be short-term or episodic (e.g. a stronger sense of community during some annual festival), while others may be long-term and lasting such as a sustained increase in people's fear of crime or a demise of long-held community linkages such as those that might have arisen from 'decoupling'.

Finally, the model recognizes that differences in the structure, complexity and interpretation of various elements in the model will be found depending on the geographical scale of analysis of the issues. Similar to the 'aggregation' problem, or modifiable areal unit problem in geography, the Spatial Scale domain therefore recognizes that much of our understanding of these community structures will be a function of the territorial scale of analysis. In urban neighborhoods for example, a unique structure or element of *sense of community* may only be recognizable at a certain territorial 'neighborhood' scale, whereas in higher-level aggregations such as districts the aggregation effects can mask important spatial variability.

But there is nothing in the model that insists that all domains be analyzed simultaneously. For example, one may hold certain features constant and examine others. This is the approach used in this thesis (Figure 2.2) – where the time and spatial scales are essentially fixed: this study is cross-sectional in that it is only concerned with an investigation of an *individual's* experience of community at a single point in time and does not attempt to identify how various elements, or structures of community experience, empirically wax and wane for different levels of spatial aggregation or at different points in time.

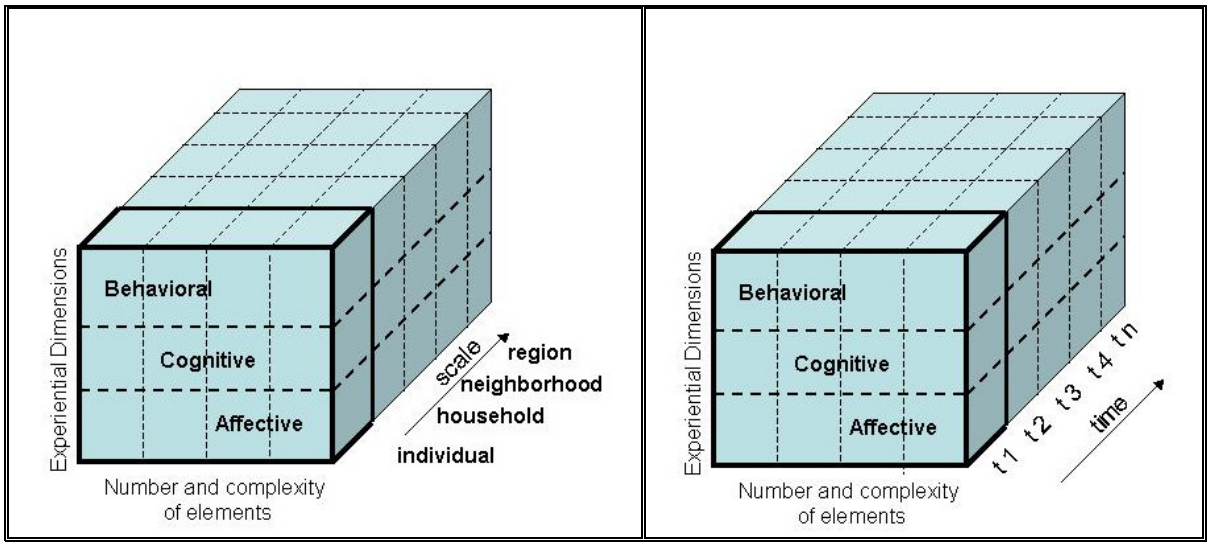

Figure 2.2 **Experiential Dimensions Through Space and Time**

The adoption of this conceptual model of place-community provides a convenient and logical way in which to understand and measure the experiential fabric of people living in rural communities. Because it has also been used in urban contexts, this approach will also allow for subsequent comparison of how rural communities may in fact differ from the urban context. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive literature review of how the various types of features of this model may be understood from a rural perspective, and what previous rural research suggests may be some of the ways in which the different behavioral, cognitive and affective elements may have changed over time or are uniquely expressed in rural social life. Understanding these features of community in rural areas may also help us to understand the relative importance of place-based community life in rural Canada, and in particular, the extent to which community still matters as a source of well-being.

2.5 Well-Being in Rural Areas: Does Community Still Matter?

In some ways, the 'decoupling' thesis suggests that rural communities are not as functionally holistic as they once were and that agro-industrialization may be threatening the well-being of rural people – creating a greater divide between farm and non-farm rural people and greater levels of hostility between corporate farms and family farms. In short, rural well-being may be threatened, more complex and possibly more differentiated than before. If the convergence thesis were also true, it would suggest that rural people's sense of well-being is becoming more urban-like and possibly not derived as much from local community or territorially-based social life. Although there has been a long-standing tradition of research (with origins in the Chicago School of Human Ecology) that has emphasized the malaise of urban life as well as the demise of community bonds and well-being in cities, there is other evidence to suggest that urban neighborhood social interactions – the experience of community – does in fact predict higher levels of well-being (Townshend 2001). In other words, community still exists in cities and community does matter for people's sense of well-being in cities. This link also needs to be examined in rural communities. Hence, this section provides a brief review of the concept of well-being, succinct ways in which to measure it and what rural research suggests about levels of well-being in rural areas.

The concept of well-being can be generally described as a person's cognitive and affective evaluation of their life. Glendinning et al. (2003) define well-being in its broadest sense including social factors such as secure social relations, a sense of belonging to a locality, a network of family and friends; not simply the absence of illness or disease. They found that rural regions display higher levels of well-being than urban

areas and Cloke et al. (1997) further postulate that the well-being of rural residents is a construct wrapped together with notions of health, community and environment; each respondent retaining a different construct. For example, age and gender may affect a person's perception of isolation; it may be viewed as a delight for some and a prison for others. Everything may be socially constructed, as well as personally constructed, dependent upon each individual – not everyone thinks the same or feels the same about all things. Thus, each 'dimension' may be different for every individual.

Leung and Lee (2005) argue that quality of life is a measure of overall life satisfaction, rather than a summation of life satisfaction across specific domains. They postulate that life satisfaction, or quality of life, may be either subjective or objective. The subjective construct is influenced by personality (optimism, pessimism, isolation, and self-worth) and the objective construct proposes that quality of life is affected by environmental or situational factors (family, job, leisure activities, and standard of living). This in turn links to Putnam's (1993, 2000, 2001) conceptual links between quality of life, community involvement and social capital. Leung and Lee (2005) found that dimensions of social support were significantly correlated to quality of life; individuals with strong social support – in the way of affirmation, aid and encouragement – enjoy a higher quality of life. Furthermore, they also discovered that participation in community and religious activities were the only people-centered leisure activity predictors, which contributed significantly to the objective assessment of life quality. Hence, social relationships and social supports are important variables that may enhance one's quality of life.

Miller et al. (1998) revealed that social involvement is a key predictor of life satisfaction in rural areas and Bramston et al. (2002) found a strong correlation of quality of life and life satisfaction being linked to sense of belonging. As well, Richmond et al. (2000) show evidence that there are higher levels of quality of life in rural areas. Hence, there are many studies that indicate strong linkages between attachment, sense of community, quality of life, self-esteem, and well-being (Bramston et al. 2002; Brehm et al. 2004; Glendinning et al. 2003; O'Brien et al. 1991; Prezza & Constantini 1998).

Townshend (2001) argues that the well-being of an individual incorporates both objective conditions (e.g. the degree to which physical needs are being met) as well as subjective conditions such as assessments of one's life (e.g. personal satisfaction). Beesley and Russwurm (1989) identify these as objective (externally observed and tangible) and subjective (internal feelings/perceptions and intangible) social indicators, which may be used as surrogate measures of well-being. Furthermore, they claim that the use of subjective social indicators in quantitative analyses of social concepts may be questionable, in that it allows the concept of well-being to be "reduced to mere numbers" (Miles 1975, cited in Beesley & Russwurm 1989). Beesley and Russwurm (1989) maintain that at the basis of analytical explorations of well-being, or quality of life, is the fundamental understanding of what it is to be human and the basic needs or wants that are required to survive. They reference Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs; the movement from the very basic needs to survive (food and shelter) to self-actualization (morality and acceptance) requires a person's perceived satisfaction with life – "presumably an individual perceives their quality of life at any given point in time and space with respect to the extent to which one has satisfied one's perceived needs and wants" (Smith 1977,

cited in Beesley & Russwurm 1989). However the limitations perceived with subjective indicators, Beesley and Russwurm (1989) contend that, in addition to objective indicators, the two represent a whole that is intertwined and overall a better understanding of social well-being may be achieved.

A useful, simple and fairly robust measure of Well-Being is the Index of Well-Being (IWB) developed by Campbell et al. (1976). It combines measures of Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS) with an Index of General Affect (IGA). Campbell et al. (1976) demonstrated the utility of the IWB as an effective measure that captures variations across many domains of life. Townshend (2001) used the IWB in a study of urban neighborhoods and showed it is an effective way of differentiating levels of well-being across urban communities. By testing the impact of the experiential structure of neighborhood social life on well-being, Townshend (2001) also showed that a number of behavioral, cognitive and affective features of community are significant predictors of increased levels of well-being. This study too uses the IWB as a measure of well-being amongst rural residents. A more detailed description of the methodology for measuring the IWB is given in Chapter 4.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has established the theoretical and conceptual basis of this thesis. It has shown how rural community studies in particular need to be contextualized within the framework of significant structural change in rural economy and social life since the 1950s. It has emphasized two key features that arise from such changes: the decoupling of agricultural production from community social life; and, given changes in technologies

and lifestyles, the potential for convergence in the patterns and structures of community experience in rural and urban areas. This chapter also outlined the conceptual model of place-community experience that provides an organizing framework for the literature review and for the empirical part of the study. Similarly, this chapter has shown that the well-being of rural residents may still depend upon local community experiences, and therefore this chapter has provided a backdrop for understanding well-being as a function of local social life. The next Chapter turns to a more detailed and systematic review of rural ideas with respect to the Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains of rural community.

Chapter 3

Perspectives on Rural Community Experience:

A Systematic Review and Linkage to the Conceptual Model

3.1 Introduction

As identified in the previous chapter, for this study the experiential structure of place-communities is initially operationalized as conforming to the conceptual model proposed by Davies and Herbert (1993) and empirically tested and largely validated in a number of studies of urban neighborhoods or communities (Townshend & Davies 1999; Townshend 2001, 2002). Hence, the experiential character of community is operationalized as a set of unique or separate structures that span the Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains of social life. To date, no empirical studies of rural community social life have examined the utility of this model or tried to link rural community perspectives to such a framework, but clearly the universality or applicability of the model will be shown to be more robust if the dimensionality of the model is similar in both urban and rural communities. While the aim of Chapter 5 is to explore the *empirical* structure of community amongst rural residents and to determine the kinds of behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions that differentiate rural residents' community experiences, the objective of *this* chapter is to provide a much-needed review of rural studies literature on community in order to situate this literature within the framework of the model of community that has been adopted for this study. The review is therefore systematically organized according to the distinctive behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions that have been previously identified in order to determine how rural

social life may be conceptualized in this way. Although it is not the principal objective of this chapter, the review also provides insights into how rural community life is now thought to be different from, or similar to, urban community life – in other words pointing to social forms of *divergence* or *convergence* of specific structures of community life. It also illustrates how some of these features are inherently linked to the ideas of social capital that have received so much scholarly attention in recent years.

3.2 Experiential Structures of Community

3.2.1 Behavioral Structures of Community Experience

This section reviews the rural studies literature with reference to what has been defined as the Behavioral domain of community experience. This domain comprises a series of unique elements or dimensions of place-community experience that represent place-particular activity sets and behaviors.

3.2.1.1 Local Facility Use

In past urban studies the use of local facilities by neighborhood residents has been identified as a distinctive behavioral dimension. Utilizing local facilities, both retail and recreational, is a recognized and marketable attribute in urban communities. Many urban dwellers prefer not to battle increasing traffic problems and therefore look to their local communities for their basic weekly shopping and recreational needs. However, with the intensification of commuting behavior the question then becomes how do rural residents think and feel about local use of facilities and is there a difference of opinions and behaviors with regards to retail and recreational needs?

Some studies suggest there is little or no difference in rural and urban usage patterns with regards to the use of local facilities (Bramston et al. 2002; Rochester & Willard 1998). However, Smithers et al. (2004) found that farmers like to 'shop around', looking for the best value for their money except they also discovered that there are strong linkages between farmers and local communities. Perhaps then, economic decisions are based on strictly better value for the money and social decisions are based upon strong social networks in a local area. Rural residents tend to support their local facilities but tend to go farther afield for better shopping opportunities.

Understanding rural people's social activity may then lead to an understanding of their consumer behavior. This correlates to Granovetter's (1974) hypothesis that economic activity is largely embedded in social networks within a community. Furthermore, the more attached people feel to their community, the more likely they are to use the facilities and local retailers. Thus, higher involvement of a person in local social activities results in higher levels of satisfaction with local facilities and retail outlets. Li et al. (2005) also discovered that easy access to facilities promotes physical activity, which then links to social capital as a neighborhood level characteristic. This further supports Miller et al. (1998) in their hypothesis that the more active rural people are the more attachment and satisfaction they feel, as well as safety and embeddedness in local social networks.

3.2.1.2 Neighboring/Informal Interaction

Neighboring, or informal social interaction, has been shown in urban studies to be distinctive from other kinds of neighbor relations. It is a unique structure of place-

community experience that is an amalgam of such behaviors as conversing with neighbors, the ability to recognize and know neighbors by name, visiting in each others homes, or even the ability to consider a neighbor a confidante (Townshend & Davies 1999; Townshend 2001, 2002). What do students of rural community say about rural neighboring or informal interactions of this sort? Does the evidence suggest that neighboring in rural communities is fundamentally different from urban communities? Is it stronger, weaker or is it becoming more urban-like?

Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) studied neighboring behavior in rural and urban communities and discovered no significant difference of neighboring behavior in rural and urban communities. Their results affirm a 1976 study carried out by Fischer (cited in Brint, 2001) that also established there were few differences between town and city dwellers in terms of their rates of visiting family and friends, their number of friends, their feelings of connection to other people in their environment, and in their satisfaction with life. However, Brint (2001) proposes that the levels of active participation, friendship networks and neighboring activities will increase in communities where frequent face-to-face interaction exists and in turn, these communities will generate reciprocities in all areas of support within the community.

Jakle (1999) suggests that neighboring in big cities is not that different from small towns in that many residents of big cities are themselves migrants from small rural regions. He maintains that neighboring behaviors in large metropolitan areas stem from those of rural regions. Migrants brought such behaviors with them and superimposed them onto the communities in which they resided. Jakle (1999) concludes that

neighboring, whether in a small town or a big city, is a form of social interaction inherently geographical in the sense that it is clearly sociospatial.

In contrast, Logan and Spitze (1994) established that people's neighborhood social interaction is strongly affected by the presence of family members in the neighborhood, especially in rural areas as opposed to urban ones. They also determined that length of residence, in both urban and rural, strongly affected neighboring patterns. Coakes and Bishop (1996) argue that social intimacy and feelings of cohesion are key features of a sense of neighborliness that is often associated more with a rural way of life as opposed to a metropolitan lifestyle. Furthermore, Donnermeyer and Barclay (2005) stress that rural communities tend to cling to traditional values which produce webs of informal social relationships that tend to increase acts of neighborliness. Given that residents of rural communities probably know a larger share of the local population, communicate face-to-face, believe in common values and norms, and share a common identity, it is the combination of these factors that ultimately increases the sense of community in a region.

A recent survey by the magazine *Successful Farming* reveals that farmers are calling time-honored values such as neighboring into question (Tevis 2000). The study shows that while there may still be high levels of attachment to communities, rural people are troubled by apparent changes in traditional family structures, the use of illegal drugs, a declining work ethic, and an increase in crime. Furthermore, respondents admitted that they were so busy they did not seem to have time to visit neighbors. However, they did maintain that in the event of an emergency traditional neighboring and a sense of community definitely comes into play. Tevis (2000) proposes that many farmers feel a

major factor negatively affecting neighboring patterns is the increase in farm size that has been taking place over the past decade.

Overall, the rural studies literature points to declining levels of rural neighboring behavior and few or no significant differences between urban, small town and rural residents in terms of informal neighboring activities. This essentially points to convergence in this feature of community experience.

3.2.1.3 Mutual Aid/Reciprocity/Informal Cooperation

Mutual cooperation is conceptually distinct from informal neighboring (Davies & Herbert 1993) and has been shown to be an empirically distinctive dimension of community experience among urban residents (Townshend 2001). This dimension is commonly defined by a series of related community-based behaviors such as borrowing and lending, providing mutual assistance or seeking information/advice from a neighbor. The classic, if not nostalgic, image of a barn-raising event is an example of what many may conceive as mutual aid in rural society. But scholars of rural community are challenging this nostalgic view of reciprocity and mutual aid; a number of studies point to declining levels of mutual aid, increasing reliance on kin rather than neighbors and increasing evidence of calculated reciprocity.

Granovetter (1974) asserted that within the community structure, economic activities are largely embedded in the social networks of a community. These networks may include "exchanges of tangible and intangible commodities, with all parties attempting to incur a proportional return" (Baggozi 1975, cited in Miller et al. 1998, p348). These kinds of exchanges define a type of unwritten code of reciprocity for the participants within the

social network of a community. Hedley (1985) suggests that mutual aid is more than giving, it is a way of possessing, a way of seeking to ensure that future needs are met. Meert (2000) concurs that reciprocity implies each participant has the capacity to produce some resources and assumes a social network with symmetric links between individuals. Moreover, Reimer's (2004a) data indicates that family and close friends play a key role for social support, especially in rural households.

However, Amato (1993) discovered there are few differences in the level of assistance provided by friends or family members between people in large cities and those in small towns. The study shows that urbanites tend to have weaker ties than rural residents but this is probably due to different demographic mixes owing to more transient populations in cities and distance from relatives. In addition, Amato (1993) found urban and rural dwellers alike would turn to family members rather than friends for assistance with serious problems. Hence, no matter where an individual resides, family continues to play a key role in their social support network.

Simpson et al. (2003) found that to maintain existing social, sporting and community services and structures in small rural communities most of the population must be involved in some way – usually in a voluntary capacity. Even in 1945, Tate maintained that what made informal activities so important in community life was the fact they not only operated within the layers of society, but cut across and connected the strands of human relations, bringing a feeling of fellowship, joint action and enthusiasm for things of mutual interest. He went on to say that the more frequent the contacts the closer the social bonds, and that informal activities played a major part in 'welding' people together in community relationships. Perkins et al. (1990) concur that social contact and

neighboring behavior allow residents to become better acquainted and discuss shared problems and provide a venue for collective action.

According to Brint (2001), the most community-like communities of place generally include many opportunities for members to interact; in other words many well-traveled meeting places such as downtowns, school and church related activities, and recreational fields, etc. Some research shows that rural communities have higher levels of social integration and attachment than urban communities. For example, Putnam (1993) contended that urban areas, because they are less congenial to social connectedness, have lower levels of social capital than rural areas. He found that people in rural areas are more likely than people in urban areas to volunteer, work on community projects, come to the aid of a stranger, and donate blood. Coakes and Bishop (1998) have the same opinion; they believe that the most salient characteristic of rural communities is the high level of involvement in community affairs.

In summary, while there may be some contradictory evidence and different factors that may account for mutual aid or reciprocity amongst rural neighbors, the rural studies literature seems to identify a trend towards decreased levels of neighborly mutual aid, increasingly calculated forms of neighboring exchange, and a shift from neighbors as sources of mutual reciprocity to reliance on kin – especially kin-neighbors. If there is such a demise of neighborly mutual aid in rural communities and the classic barn-raising event is no longer symbolic of such behaviors, it may signal a *convergence* as rural neighbors may be becoming urban-like with respect to their non-reliance on neighbors for help and mutual aid.

3.2.1.4 Organizational Involvement

In the city of Lethbridge, involvement in formal community-based organizations was shown to be a unique behavioral dimension of place-community experience that differentiates the social fabric of urban neighborhoods (Townshend 2001). It is a structure that is an amalgam of attributes that summarize differences in both the *number* of organizations that residents are involved with, as well as the *degree* of involvement or dedication, such as casual membership to high levels of participation on boards of directors, etc. What do scholars of rural society say about rural participation or behaviors in terms of memberships and activities in formal organizations?

Kenworthy Teather (1997) argues that one way in which people become attached to places is through developing bonds to organizations that have a place or community focus. She contends that individual identity, place, community, and organization are all bonded together, each one affecting the other for better or worse. Additionally, her research supports the hypothesis that belonging to organizations and associations helps one to gain a sense of self-worth and self-identity, it aids in building a sense of belonging to one's community.

Smithers et al. (2004) discovered a high incidence of volunteering – specifically in rural communities; and Tolbert et al. (2002) found links between voluntary associations and civic engagement. Furthermore, Wikle (1997) agrees that club membership strengthens business alliances and helps to foster a sense of community and rootedness to a place. Wikle (1997) also claims that clubs in small towns may function as informal chambers of commerce. For example, Wikle (1997) notes that membership in Kiwanis-type organizations are generally highest within rural communities. These clubs are also

used as a means of establishing contacts and networking, which may be crucial for business success in rural communities. Nevertheless, O'Brien et al. (1991) insist that a leader's extra-community ties as well as their relationships to one another in the extended local area will have an impact on the viability of rural communities. They postulate that, in accordance with Granovetter (1974), the weak ties and building of bridges from the local community to outside that community will be a potential source of support for the local community.

There may also be a link between membership and involvement in formal organizations and the increase of social capital in a community. Simpson et al. (2003) found that increased activity in formal organizations increased the level of social capital in the community. However, Simpson et al. (2003) contend organizations that contributed to the growth of positive social capital formation could also "crack and leak, resulting in leaving [a] community, metaphorically, high and dry" (p284).

Overall, the rural studies literature is somewhat contradictory on the issue of social involvement in formal organizations. Some writers argue that divergence is evident, with higher rates of participation and organizational commitment in rural social life, while others point to a type of convergence, in part fueled by agro-industrialization and expansionist agricultural regimes. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that behaviors associated with membership in formal organizations remains a distinctive dimension of rural place-community experience.

3.2.1.5 Political Participation

In urban neighborhoods, political participation has consistently been shown to be a separate behavioral dimension of local community experience, one that simultaneously captures propensities to be active or vote in both local as well as extra-local politics (Townshend & Davies 1999; Townshend 2001). It is quite likely that it is also a unique structure of rural community behavior that is distinctive from other features of experience such as neighboring or mutual cooperation.

The results of the study completed by Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) indicate that there is no significant difference in voting practices of rural and urban communities. Turcotte (2005) and Zimmer (1983) also found no substantial differences between urban and rural Canada in terms of political involvement. However, Zimmer (1983) did find that a level of attachment to community, termed communality, was strongly correlated to local voting practices, particularly in rural communities. He also found that age is consistently linked to voting participation with older citizens more likely to vote.

Given that little difference in political behaviors is generally found between urban, suburban, small town, and rural populations, convergence seems to be the underlying trend, reinforcing the possibility that political participation may be found as a unique structure of place-community experience, as it is in urban settings.

3.2.1.6 Supportive Milieu

In urban communities this dimension is associated with a set of behaviors that involve the deliberate attempt to develop and maintain linkages with individuals, agencies or institutional allies that may assist the community, particularly in times of

unwanted development. This notion of "milieu reliability" (Gottlieb 1979, p475) has not received the same attention by rural researchers, although there is some evidence that it is also an important feature of rural social life.

For example, Coakes and Bishop (1996) argue that rural communities provide a supportive social milieu that is unavailable in big cities. They insist, "a rural environment is a place where one is known and knows others, where friendliness is the norm and where relationships are interpersonal and egalitarian rather than instrumental and hierarchical" (Rowles 1990, p106). Research by Greiner et al. (2004) also found that low-density areas have more socially active populations that work together to solve problems through community activities. In order for isolated, rural communities to be viable in today's global economy the need to build bridges and links outside their own local community becomes paramount; these types of social support give access to assets and resources of power that benefit the community (O'Brien et al. 1991; O'Brien & Hassinger 1992; Reimer 2004a, 2004b).

These links and bridges are also fundamental building blocks for social capital and increased social ties that then permeate into the growth of Local Development Organizations (LDOs) (O'Brien & Hassinger 1992; Green et al. 2002). These LDOs provide a base for increased social interactions, which in turn promote the growth of supportive actions and network ties amongst the residents of a community. Community members are able to mobilize their collective resources in order to attain a communal goal, which also increases the level of social capital in the community (Brown 2002). Furthermore, Green et al. (2002) found there to be very little difference between rural and urban communities in terms of participation by residents in LDOs.

Overall, the evidence seems to point to divergence rather than convergence, suggesting that such behaviors are now more necessary in rural communities, may be more intense in rural communities, are increasingly associated with female participation, and are becoming more crucial for the survival of small rural communities and for their sustained access to outside resources.

3.2.2 Cognitive Structures of Community Experience

The second domain to be reviewed concerns a series of dimensions that are collectively called the Cognitive domain of place-community experience. Davies and Herbert's (1993) review of the urban studies literature first identified how such features may be conceptually and theoretically distinctive from either behavioral or affective features of community social life. A number of empirical studies carried out in urban communities have shown that unique cognitive dimensions can in fact be isolated (Townshend & Davies 1999; Townshend 2000, 2002). It is not yet known whether or not similar dimensions are evident in rural communities, and so a brief review of the rural studies literature is required in order to assess the rural linkages with cognitive aspects of community.

3.2.2.1 Cognitive Mapping

"A cognitive map is a term used to describe one's internal representation of the external world" (Golledge 2002, p7). According to Golledge (2002) it is a *hypothetical* construct which is sometimes used metaphorically to describe the process of recreating stored spatial information in working memory, but it has "yet to be proven that humans

do or do not store this spatial information in a map-like manner in the brain" (Nadel 1999, cited in Golledge 2002, p7; O'Keefe & Nadel 1978). However, Golledge (2002) does claim that people deliberately encode environmental information so that it can be used at a later time to identify where things are in a surrounding space, how to get from one place to another and/or how to communicate spatial knowledge to other people. Cognitive maps are not instantly built but emerge over time as more correct spatial information is accumulated. Hence, they are "dynamic entities that change as information changes and as the environment changes" (Golledge 2002, p9).

Cognition of one's environment then implies that meanings, images and symbolic significance are given to one's surroundings. Stoneall (1981) describes cognitive mapping as the process by which individuals and groups acquire, code, store, recall, and decode information about relative locations and attributes of their everyday spatial environment. Hence, according to Stoneall (1981), "people are not aware of everything but [rather] grasp chunks of meaning." (p121) How does one make sense of their physical surroundings? Individuals perceive their surroundings in their own way and a range of boundaries are then identified. Furthermore, Stoneall (1981) finds that these boundaries vary more for women than for men. Golledge (2002) agrees there are male/female differences due to the historical role of both men and women. Traditionally men were explorers and hunters, which took them to distant places, this necessitated their motivation to know and understand their surroundings so they could return home in a timely manner. On the other hand, historically the roles of women were gatherers and guardians of children; from this perspective women would then gain extremely detailed knowledge of their immediate surroundings. Even today, these gender differences may be

related to the kinds of interests and activities that women and men engage in. For example, women tend to be more active in informal *social* activities – which usually take place close to home – and men tend to be active in more formal *official* activities – which may take place in more distant locales.

Golledge (2002) also maintains that when it comes to cognitive mapping, women more often use the landmark-based approach as opposed to men who generally attempt to comprehend the general layout and establish frames of reference (i.e. recognizing cardinal directions). In the same vein of discourse, Stoneall (1983) argues that people selectively perceive and name their environments, they choose particular names and places to symbolize the community to which they belong and the place in which they reside. All of these elements of cognitive mapping "serve as a template onto which environmental structure is 'mapped' and information is mined for quantitative concepts such as distance, direction, orientation, magnitude, shape, pattern, object, class, connectivity, hierarchy, and so on" (Golledge 2002, p9).

In 1960, Lynch discussed the comprehension of one's environment as being dominated by two dimensions: 1) clarity of spatial representations of one's surroundings – focusing on both physical characteristics and spatial relations and 2) a focus on behavior. The first dimension Lynch (1960) argues, is that environment be examined for coherent structure, dependent upon the ability of one to organize the complexity of their surrounding environment. He continues by explaining that the second dimension is the "ease with which human beings manipulate spatial information to assist them in moving between particular origins and destinations" (Lynch 1960, p154). Hence, an intelligible environment is one where "destinations can be observed or estimated and where travel

can be guided by directly viewing elements in the surrounding space" (Golledge 2002, p2). Golledge (2002) concludes that taking all of these factors into consideration, different people will perceive different features in different ways and base their cognitive representations on them, resulting in substantially different spatial representations being constructed by different people.

These differences in cognitive mapping potential may be different or separate from other experiential aspects of community life. For instance, Townshend (2002) showed that among residents of Lethbridge, two unique structures of cognitive mapping could be isolated: one comprises *complex* elements and landmarks, the other comprises *simple* cognitive skills. The rural studies literature also suggests there may be unique structures of rural cognition and cognitive mapping. In particular, environmental cognition may be especially important in rural areas (Li et al. 2005; Stoneall 1981, 1983). In addition to gender-based differences in cognition in rural areas, rurality is often seen to provide unique symbols of place. For these reasons, there may continue to be divergence in the cognitive mapping attributes of urban and rural residents.

3.2.2.2 People Identity

Quite distinctive from cognitive mapping, urban studies have shown that a unique Cognitive dimension exists in cities – one that comprises a series of attributes concerning the extent to which people understand and interpret the social diversity or homogeneity of their communities. It may include a number of such traits, including homogeneity based on age, gender, ethnicity, style of dress, and other forms of visual appearance (Townshend & Davies 1999; Townshend 2001, 2002). A review of the rural studies

literature also points to the potential for unique people-identity forms of community cognition.

Coakes and Bishop (1996) perceive rural and small town environments as places where social involvement can achieve a sense of identity and belonging that is more difficult to obtain in highly populated urban settings. Bell (1992) agrees that the rural-urban continuum – the idea that community is more characteristic of country places than cities – is real in that it remains an important source of identity for rural residents. Furthermore, Donnermeyer and Barclay (2005) concur that in rural communities, residents are much more likely to know one another, communicate face to face, believe in common values and norms, as well as share a common identity which is distinct from other people and places. Hopkins (1998) as well maintains that rural people are different from urban and sometimes referred to as the 'other'.

Rural communities perceive themes such as closeness to nature, quietness, a slower pace of life, knowing everyone, and helping others as a tradition to uphold and regard as unique. These ideals can be recognized as Toennies' (1940) gemeinschaft concepts of common beliefs and ways of life such as tradition, familism, solidarity, antimaterialism, and nationalism. It is the reality of living close to the land and its products that give this social construct the power to distinguish rural from urban in the minds of rural people and afford them the unique identity, which they aspire to. Even Hummon (1986, 1990) concedes that the rural-urban continuum remains to be an important source of legitimation, motivation, understanding, and identity.

In some research rural people are referred to as the 'ethnic minority' due to the fact that they are a relatively homogeneous grouping of people dominated by an urban

majority (Atkin 2003; Rice 2001; Weisheit & Wells 2005). Atkin (2003) provides six general characteristics of rural life and social structure that could further describe rural people identity: 1) small scale, 2) isolated, 3) a product of agriculture – referring to place identity; 4) strong community feelings, friendlier than urban communities and more tightly knit – referring to sense of community; 5) conservative/traditional values, and 6) a slower way of life – referring to people identity. Consequently, in rural areas where emotional and social obligations and strong group norms may restrict individuals from behaving in ways that do not conform – results in a stronger sense of cohesion among residents. It is then fair to say that there may be a difference between rural and urban, as well as a stronger sense of identity amongst rural residents.

The perceptions of a unique identity among rural residents permeates through much of the literature; Brint (2001), Meares (1997), Kenworthy Teather (1997), Obst et al. (2002b), and Reimer (2004a, 2004b) all make reference to a unique construct in which ruralites describe themselves as different from urbanites. Rural people's collective and individual identities are seen as a similar cultural variable of rural communities and form a basis for social identification unique to rural and small town residents.

Overall, rural distinctiveness and a higher sense of 'fellow-members' amongst ruralites may still be an important kind of divergence rather than convergence in urban and rural social life.

3.2.3 Affective Structures of Community Experience

The last domain to be reviewed concerns features of community social life that are associated with people's feelings, emotions, beliefs, and senses. Perhaps the most

commonly understood of these is what many would call 'sense of community' or 'psychological sense of community'. However, Davies and Herbert's (1993) review of the urban studies and psychology literature showed that, both conceptually and theoretically, many other affective dimensions of community life were possible. Empirical studies in urban communities have shown that many other unique sources of differentiation are found within the Affective domain (Townshend 2001, 2002). Some studies have also shown that affective components of community social life are especially important in accounting for variations in individual and collective well-being amongst community residents (Townshend 2001).

3.2.3.1 Place Symbolism

A person's perception of a place depends on their individual or collective mental and emotional associations. For example, monuments, fortresses and other public structures form part of cultural landscapes around the world and they offer a wealth of opportunities for analyzing and explaining people's values and activities. These cultural symbols exist because people attach meaning to things, hence making icons that represent a place, a region and/or an emotion.

Jakle (1999) postulated that symbolic landscapes and places carry sentimental implications as people idealize the world referentially on the basis of past knowing and that this nostalgia is selective. Places can be described on many geographical scales but in the end the meaning of any place is connected through the behavior of the individual and thus the most important places are those to which we feel connected. Specific places people feel attached to are often settings in which a wealth of experiences has been

garnered and summon a complex set of emotions based on affection and response (Jakle 1999). To have roots in such a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things. Symbolic place then, involves "imagined locales referenced in one's constructing the world as idealized geography" (Jakle 1999, p2).

Troughton (1995) argues that one of the priorities of Canadian people should be that of generating interest in and attachment to rural Canada by its predominately urban population. Many people have snubbed rural areas and others are entirely indifferent (Troughton 1995, 1999). Furthermore, Troughton (1999) challenges those individuals who perceive rural regions negatively – as non-urban and/or awaiting development – to renew their interest in the rural environments of Canada for their positive aspects such as landscape beauty and heritage. Troughton (1999) uses this concept as a symbolic statement to 'others' to consider rural Canada and its inhabitants as prestigious rather than inconsequential. He continues with this argument by insisting that rural Canada should be greater than the sum of its parts. "There is a need to approach rural Canada from the bottom up, with particular reference to the inherent links between the collective functions of the extensive land base and the array of rural communities, farm and non-farm" (Troughton 1995, p300). In addition, Troughton (1999) suggests that the method of achieving more interest in rural Canada may be accomplished by focusing on the concept of heritage. Through this kind of focus Canadians will be able to understand what has occurred, what has been lost and what might be regained, as well as increasing their knowledge of the rural past as a basis for development of a broader-based attachment to rural landscapes and communities (Troughton 1995, 1999). In the same vein, Kenworthy

Teather (1997) maintains that place takes shape out of the activities of men and women in that place.

In summary, rural areas are social constructions that give place a distinctive symbolism in that it becomes an ideal where there are shared beliefs and common values – an escape from the reality of metropolitan life that links to a strong sense of well-being (Bell 1992; Brown et al. 2005; Glendinning et al. 2003; Hopkins 1998; Jakle 1999; Mitchell et al. 2004).

3.2.3.2 Attachment/Sentiment

Places that people live often acquire special emotional significance. The phenomenon of place attachment and sentiment to place is common because human beings exist in particular spatial settings. Place attachment, or sentiment, refers to the emotional connection formed by an individual to a physical location due to the meaning given to the site as a function of its role as a setting for experience. A wide range of thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and feelings are evoked through attachment to place; and this has often been identified as a unique structure of community experience.

Jakle (1999) contends that for individuals, sentiments attached to place help define personal identity and that place attachment is a substructure of self-identity. Lev-Wiesel (2003) argues that place attachment is distinctive from attachment to a person in that it represents a mutual bond between person and place, and that a rural person's place attachment is developed through everyday work. This illustrates what could be an important rural-urban distinction because ever since the industrial revolution a city-

dweller's place of residence and place of work have become increasingly detached (Townshend 2006; Meares 1997).

Data analyses by several researchers have both confirmed and disputed the hypothesis that rural residents develop stronger levels of place attachment and sentiment. Some studies confirm the early research of Toennies, Simmel and Wirth that rural people do foster higher levels of community and place attachment (Beaudoin & Thorson 2004). Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) discovered increased levels of place attachment and sentiment as well as evidence of advanced social integration in rural areas. However, other research (Theodori & Luloff 2000) contradicts the Wirthian hypothesis that smaller, more rural communities foster stronger levels of solidarity and integration, and in turn, attachment.

Moreover, there have been discoveries by other students of rural society that indicate community attachment is a multi-dimensional construct (Beggs et al. 1996; O'Brien & Hassinger 1992; Brehm et al. 2004; Pepperdine 2001). These researchers identify at least two dimensions of community and place attachment: sense of fit and community evaluation. These two dimensions are meant to measure an individual's social bonding and physical rootedness. These researchers agree there are at least two distinctive dimensions of attachment that identify both social and environmental elements, which increase feelings of rootedness to a community. Thus, due to the multi-dimensionality of communities – urban and rural – depending on how you measure each dimension, leads to similarities as well as differences within and between the rural and the urban. Hence, place attachment and sentiment to place can be viewed as a social construct based upon subjective and arbitrary values of each individual.

Furthermore, Brehm et al. (2004) established that certain natural environmental variables positively influence attachment. They found that newcomers quickly formed strong sentimental ties to a community based on natural environmental factors such as landscapes, viewscapes and presence of wildlife. In addition, McCool and Martin (1994, cited in Brehm et al. 2004) discovered that newcomers to a rural area were more highly attached to their communities than long-term residents. It was argued that this attachment and sentiment of the newcomers was possibly due to the fact that "they became attached to the biophysical and landscape features of a place as opposed to the social networks and local relationships" (McCool & Martin 1994, cited in Brehm et al. 2004, p410). These kinds of environmental attributes add to existing social elements to build potentially stronger foundations for community attachments that incorporate crucial elements of both (Brehm et al. 2004).

Place attachment and sentiment are often promoted by physical attributes of a location but these physical elements may prompt memories of social relations and this then encourages community attachment. Due to the melding of rural and urban, we may surmise a convergence taking place in terms of this dimension, specifically in less isolated rural regions.

3.2.3.3 Evaluation/Satisfaction

Satisfaction with one's community is a defining element in measuring the quality of life one perceives they possess. In past urban studies this dimension was identified by general feelings of satisfaction with neighborhoods as well as the desirability of living in the community (Townshend 2001, 2002). By and large, people rate their local

neighborhoods compared to others they may have lived in, on these foundations of personal perceptions they are able to identify how satisfied they feel with their quality of life.

There have been claims that levels of community satisfaction have declined in rural areas due to their incorporation into a global consumer economy that has led to diminished satisfaction with community life and lessened feelings of cohesion (Brown 1993; Hoyt et al. 1995). The issue of density may explain the differing levels of community satisfaction discovered in some studies. The primary findings of Greiner et al. (2004) show low-density rural areas with increased levels of satisfaction because they have socially active populations working together to solve problems through community activities, and more densely settled rural areas to have a lower favorable perception of community satisfaction and quality of life.

Social ties are major predictors of community satisfaction and these social dimensions are important to determine rural residents' satisfaction with their community and their quality of life (Filkins et al. 2000; Goudy 1977). Rural people find the most satisfying communities to be those having strong primary group relationships – where local people participate and take pride in civic affairs, where decisions are shared, where residents are heterogeneous, and where people are committed to the community and its upkeep. Filkins et al. (2000) also discovered that independent variables of satisfaction fell into four categories: 1) personal social satisfaction – friend and family ties, 2) personal economic satisfaction – employment and income, 3) personal characteristics – age, gender, education, & length of residence, and finally 4) general community attributes – schools, streets, police, & government. They concluded it was the social dimensions of

community and satisfaction with social factors that were the important determinants of community satisfaction.

Toth et al. (2002) argue that it is the separation of the public and private spheres of existence in today's society that affects the level of community satisfaction, urban and rural. The public sphere includes work and politics, and the private sphere comprises friends, family and intimate relationships. Urban and rural locations represent a demarcation in how individuals experience both spheres of existence. Urban dwellers tend to separate their lives more distinctly into the public and private than do rural people. Rural residents do not fit the public-private model because fewer lines are drawn between the two spheres; due to smaller populations and the adage that 'everyone knows everyone', resulting in the public and private lives of rural residents bleeding into one another. Possibly due to this blurring of lines students of rural society discovered that rural residents display significantly higher levels of community satisfaction than residents of urban neighborhoods (Toth et al. 2002; Theodori 2001).

This dimension may then display a lack of convergence – especially in more isolated rural communities, whilst more densely populated and urban-fringe areas may support the theory of convergence for rural and urban. In summary, urban dwellers tend to embrace an 'experience-centric' view of community based upon a social construct of interpersonal ties rather than locality, and conversely rural residents envision their communities with a much more 'place-centric' view, maintaining their sense of community through interactions with friends and family (Toth et al. 2002). Furthermore, population density and urban sprawl may prove to have dramatic effects on this dimension and should be taken into consideration in any analysis.

3.2.3.4 Nuisances/Annoyances

People in urban residential areas often experience nuisances, annoyances or other kinds of negative externalities. Davies and Herbert's (1993) review of the urban studies literature showed that nuisances and annoyances might be a conceptually distinctive type of place-community dimension, although Townshend (2001) showed that in Lethbridge local and extra-local nuisance issues are not necessarily part of the same construct. There may be somewhat of a nostalgic view that rural areas are quiet, clean and free of nuisances with few negative externalities impinging on the lives of rural residents. However, the rural studies literature suggests that structural change in the rural and agricultural economy is increasing – resulting in additional nuisances, annoyances and higher levels of conflict.

Novek (2002) speaks of the growth of large corporate livestock operations he refers to as 'transnational treadmills of production'. He argues that the numbers of these operations has increased dramatically and are quite concentrated, leading to negative environmental issues such as odor and water-quality concerns. The result has been an increase in opposition to factory farms, from an environmental standpoint, that cannot be ignored (Novek 2002). Many conflicts have arisen in rural municipalities in Canada, especially since the 'Walkerton Water Disaster' in May 2000. Smithers et al. (2004) agree that intensification of agriculture in general has been linked to increases in community conflicts.

Smith and Krannich (2000) posit that urban-origin newcomers to rural communities bring a different sociocultural identity when they migrate. This identity contrasts with the identities of long-term rural residents and causes tension and animosity within the rural

community. This clash has been termed a "culture clash" (Price & Clay 1980; Jobes 1995, cited in Smith & Krannich 2000) since it is hypothesized that the "cultural and social systems of small towns composed of locals are markedly different from the systems of the metropolis" (Jobes 1995, cited in Smith & Krannich 2000, p399). However, results from Smith and Krannich's (2000) study show that these attitudes are only held by some of the newcomers and some of the long-term residents, not by all members of the community.

Perkins et al. (1990) argue that incivilities are symbols of social disorder and are separated into physical incivilities and social incivilities. Furthermore, physical incivilities can be passive (litter and unkempt housing) or deliberate (graffiti and vandalism). They claim that social incivilities include signs of disorder (gang activity, prostitutes and drug dealers). Furthermore, studies by Obst et al. (2002b) have shown evidence that elements such as annoyance, environment and attraction emerge as separate and distinct dimensions, which contradict the theorized dimensions of McMillan and Chavis (1986). These sense of community studies (Obst et al. 2002b) confirm just how complex a process dissecting these dimensions is. Dimensions tend to overlap and intertwine with one another so much that it becomes evident one cannot exist without the other. For example, an individual may have a strong sense of community based on their sense of belonging and social interactions but paradoxically they cannot have a strong sense of belonging and social participation without having a strong sense of community.

Rural areas are not necessarily idyllic or harmonious places. New and more frequent types of nuisances, annoyances or negative externalities are emerging in rural areas. More frequent conflicts over transnational agricultural corporations, intensification of livestock

production, environmental impacts, and more social incivility seem to be causing this dimension of community experience to become more urban-like. But no studies to date have empirically assessed whether these features are conflated with other types of community experience or whether nuisances and annoyances are distinctive from other dimensions of community experience.

3.2.3.5 Safety/Security

Issues of safety and security in urban neighborhoods and rural communities are a growing concern. Neighborhood watch groups endeavor to safeguard their communities against a variety of potential threats through informal networks of their resident citizens. Hence, safety and security is often described in terms of trust as well as crime rates. Previous urban studies have also identified trust as an element of safe and secure surroundings. These studies identified safety and security based upon perceptions of neighborhoods consisting of typically welcoming and friendly people.

Miller et al. (1998) postulate that in today's mobile society, small towns are no longer isolated nor immune to problems formerly experienced in more densely populated areas. However, many people tend to feel safer in a place they have lived their entire life where they know people, than somewhere they do not know anyone. Research from the mid 1970s by Hynson (1975, cited in Miller et al. 1998), and Sauer et al. (1976, cited in Miller et al. 1998) found that many elderly residents of rural communities stayed because they were satisfied with their community and felt safer in small town environments. This attitude permeates through rural communities and is illustrated in the significant difference in trust issues of rural and urban communities (Beaudoin & Thorson 2004). In

general, rural residents are found to display higher degrees of trust and are not as fearful of crime as are their urban counterparts; yet it is speculated that this rural-urban dichotomy is not as clear-cut as it appears and in fact it may be disappearing altogether (Ball 2001).

It has been speculated that this merging of attitudes towards crime may be happening because rural areas are becoming more populated and rural police officers may not be as involved in local community activities as they once were (Donnermeyer & Barclay 2005). Rural police officers usually have intimate knowledge of the local population resulting in an increased presumption of safety and security by residents in the area. Rural police officers garner these intimate relationships through close personal ties with the community by active participation within the area – for example, involvement in recreation and volunteer organizations (Donnermeyer & Barclay 2005).

Furthermore, population stability in many rural areas may aid in controlling crime rates as well as maintaining higher levels of social integration (Barnett & Mencken 2002). Although little research on rural crime has been conducted, social cohesion and integration have been linked to relatively lower crime rates in rural areas (Jobes 1999). O'Connor and Gray (1989) also concluded that rural areas display less deviant behavior than their urban counterparts. However, population density and geographical isolation have been found to be mitigating factors within this dimension as well; for instance, profound differences were discovered between the commission of crimes in agricultural and recreational towns of differing sizes and distances from major urban centers (Jobes 1999).

There may be a convergence taking place with respect to rural and urban crime rates, in that rural areas seem to be 'catching up' to urban – depending again upon population density and relative closeness to urban centers (Rephann 1999). This may be linked to the urbanization and development process of rural communities, echoing the theme that urban and rural social life is undergoing a structural convergence.

3.2.3.6 Empowerment

A 'sense of empowerment' is feeling that one can either individually or collectively (with fellow community members) make a difference or shape the outcome of their communities. It has been shown to be a unique affective structure of communities within cities and may comprise different types of power. For instance, Townshend (2001) showed that in Lethbridge this dimension of community variation was an amalgam of personal or individual power, informal collective power, as well as formal collective power. It is through empowerment that residents may act to contact politicians, informally unite against unwanted development or make formal appearances before municipal government to prevent unwanted change in their communities. A number of researchers have also considered the role and characteristics of empowerment in rural communities.

Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988, cited in Perkins et al. 1990) define empowerment as the connection between a sense of personal competence, a desire for and a willingness to take action in the public domain. Perkins et al. (1990) argue that empowerment should have a clear communitarian, or collectivist, orientation so that it would have the conceptual benefit of distinguishing empowerment from self-efficacy and internal locus

of control. Peterson et al. (2005) claim that empowerment is a social-action process through which people gain greater control, efficacy and social justice. No matter what definition one ascribes to the development of empowerment, it is produced through active, meaningful participation in community groups and activities. Simpson et al. (2003) emphasize that as a means to sustainable community development, the concept of empowerment and the importance of ownership are vital components for any community. Peterson et al. (2005) identify two different kinds of empowerment; the first is intrapersonal – which relates to one's beliefs about political efficacy and perceived leadership competence, the second is interactional – which deals with one's knowledge of resources, casual agents and critical awareness in mastering political systems. Findings indicate that "although there [are] vital differences between women and men there [are] no identifiable differences in the levels of empowerment between urban and rural regions" (Peterson et al. 2005, p241). Conversely, Brooks (2005) claims that small rural communities have had a decrease in collective action possibly due to the fact that there is less access to public goods and services. For example, Novek (2003) points out that intensive livestock operations have ignited a polarization of local politics of space, place and environment in many communities in Canada.

Hughes (1987) speaks to the importance of empowerment in rural areas to aid in rural development due to the fact that rural services – such as health facilities – are limited and continue to be downscaled. Rasmussen (1987) agrees with this hypothesis as he also addressed this issue with regards to building roads, improving housing, providing adequate water and sewage treatment, as well as electricity to rural regions – with specific focus on rural sustainable development and economic development specifically

within rural regions. Empowerment then may be seen as the ability to "enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives" (Rappaport 1981, p15) as well as the "influence that organizations and people have to affect their lives and the lives of those they care about" (Vanderslice 1984, p2).

In summary, most of the rural literature on empowerment suggests that convergence is taking place. Rural residents seem to be experiencing a decrease in their sense of empowerment – especially noticeable is a feeling of powerlessness against agribusiness and confined feeding operations (CFOs) in particular. Decreasing levels of collective action are evident, leading to the findings that there are little or no significant differences in empowerment by urban and rural geography. Nevertheless, the existence of a distinctive empowerment dimension of community experience in rural areas has not previously been demonstrated, although it is feasible since it has been shown to be a unique structure of community differentiation in urban neighborhoods.

3.2.3.7 Place Appearance/Aesthetics/Beauty

Many people take pride in the unique character or distinctive appearance of their neighborhoods and communities. Hence, the overall appearance of a place has a profound influence on behavior toward that place. There is a unique sense of beauty with regards to rural space and different people may interpret the landscape of such places in different ways leading to the idea that the landscape itself is 'read' much like a textbook (d'Hauteserre 2001). Therefore, the romantic visions of rurality are only an abstract notion of what rural life really is and these concepts of rurality are merely social constructions based on nostalgic views of nature. There is a 'spiritual energy' people

equate with rural space and it is with that energy they understand and experience their surroundings (Mitchell et al. 2004).

Brehm et al. (2004) found that place attachment could be measured by utilizing both a social dimension as well as a natural environment dimension. In particular, the natural environment dimension focused on place appearance and aesthetics including such features as presence of wildlife, natural landscapes and viewscapes. By incorporating the natural environment dimension, delineation appears in levels of community attachment between rural and urban populations (Brehm et al. 2004). As well, in a study of relative quality of life – which included elements of aesthetic landscape beauty – of rural and urban residents, an overwhelming feeling emerges that rural living is associated with a higher quality of life (Bell 1992). This higher quality of life is based upon aesthetic landscapes and scenic beauty that are particularly important to newcomers in rural areas (Richmond et al. 2000).

Changes in land-use patterns however, are having an important impact on landscapes. Although rural landscapes change over time owing to nature's ecological processes, today they are changing ever more quickly as a consequence of the impact that human beings are having on the environment. Walker and Fortmann (2003) argue that many rural places presently sit at an uneasy crossroads between traditional natural resource-based production, and new economies and cultures of aesthetic landscape consumption. They maintain there are growing disputes over landscapes being 'gentrified and aestheticized'; for instance, *rural sprawl* and *smart growth* have grown from conflicts emerging from places where economic and cultural value is being placed not on individual natural resources but on aesthetic and environmental values such as *viewsheds*

and *rural quality* (Walker & Fortmann 2003). Hence, there is a crisis occurring; the natural environmental qualities that attracted people to rural locales have themselves become threatened by continuing migration and rural residential growth.

3.2.3.8 Latent Involvement/Participation

Unlike actual neighboring behavior, a separate structure of community experience that captures *latent* behavior potential has been identified in a number of separate studies (Townshend 2001, 2002). This is a composite feature that summarizes a set of related features concerning people's willingness to help, a feeling that neighborly assistance is non-obligatory and the ways in which people believe their neighbors are willing to help one another. This is an affective trait because it does not concern past or measurable behaviors—rather it captures how people feel or think they may behave in given situations. There seems to be only tangential evidence that this type of community experience has been considered by students of rural society.

For example, Perkins et al. (1990) argue that in large metropolitan areas several dimensions of community social environment may be related to community participation. Particularly, social contact such as informal mutual assistance and neighboring behavior that allows residents to become better acquainted and discuss shared problems, which provide an impetus toward collective action. Sampson (2003) argues that it is the linkage of mutual trust and shared expectations for intervening on behalf of the common good that defines the neighborhood context of what they call collective efficacy. It is this collective efficiency that brings about the likelihood that neighbors could be counted on to take action if need be.

Hedley (1985) discusses an earlier time in central Alberta – the inter-war and early post-war period – when rural people enjoyed a distinct way of life that was based on considerable cooperation and mutual self-help, as well as a deep involvement in community life. “Neighbors were relied on and sought after to provide support in many areas of life” (Hedley 1985, p29). This period refers to a time when most of the population on the prairies consisted of rural farmers who struggled to survive the long, harsh winters and hot, dry summers with limited technology and very lean bank accounts. It was a time when mutual cooperation was a staple of rural society. Farmers today are much more self-reliant due to technological innovations and advances in farming techniques and practices. In addition, many rural residents lead a commuting lifestyle and do not necessarily work in a rural setting but rather travel to larger urban centers for their employment, this effectively distances people from their neighbors and draws the focus of most rural people’s lives specifically to their workplace and their families.

Hughes (1987) contends that the stereotypical characteristics of rural life as described above have also “declined as changes in family composition have affected the availability of labour” (p31). He argues that the decline of community can be seen in the fact that although networks remain in rural communities they must be “sought out in bowling alleys, curling rinks and other such contexts” (p32). Hughes (1987) maintains that the reason for this decline in mutual aid may be traced to economics. People have become self-centered bottom liners; in other words, if there is no financial benefit for them then why get involved. However, Hughes (1987) goes on to contradict himself and states that sometimes the non-obligatory lifestyle of rural people still does exist. He argues that many rural people do not hesitate to offer their assistance or services when

they see a need; it just does not happen as often because people are much more self-sufficient than they were in the past.

Although the rural focus on latent mutual aid is limited, the literature does seem to point to a type of convergence. Rural people are seen to be more urban-like in that there are decreasing levels and beliefs of latent participation, a greater feeling that reciprocity is more calculated than it was in the past, and a sense that mutual aid is becoming more kin-oriented than neighbor-oriented.

3.2.3.9 Common Values/Morality

A personal value is a belief or philosophy that has meaning to an individual. Whether we are consciously aware of them or not, every person has a core set of personal values that may range from a belief in hard work, purpose and punctuality to self-reliance and concern for others. These personal values are the fundamental building blocks of morality; in essence, they define what is right and wrong.

A moral community is one that has a relatively coherent social network that creates and supports meaningful, formal community organizations (Johnson & Mullins 1990). Such a moral community provides common goals and a common social and historical context within which to view one's life, and these social networks encourage and sustain adherence to a common vision (Coakes & Bishop 1996).

A locale to which such shared beliefs of a population strongly attach is symbolic of a common vision in rural communities (Hummon 1986). Rural residents are often a more homogeneous group who value conservative and traditional views that provide a set of common values and goals to a community (Atkin 2003; Barnett & Mencken 2002; Bell

1992; Bryant & Joseph 2001; Donnermeyer & Barclay 2005; Hazen 2000; Heather et al. 2005; Jobes 1999; Smith & Krannich 2000). Hence, many studies show that rural regions have higher levels of perceived moral homogeneity and community-oriented lifestyles. These moral similarities are important features of gemeinschaft social relations that have coherent social networks creating meaningful community organization (Brint 2001; Coakes & Bishop 1996).

The rural literature on common values within the structure of community seems to be limited. However, due to the relative homogeneity of rural society a divergence may still exist between rural and urban lifestyles in this particular dimension.

3.2.3.10 Sense of Community/Belonging/Empathy

A sense of community refers to the feeling of belonging in a group and the absence of a sense of community may lead to feelings of alienation, isolation and loneliness (Sarason 1974). Furthermore, a strong sense of community has been linked to improved well-being, empowerment and life satisfaction (Chavis & Wandersman 1990; Prezza & Costantini 1998). Sense of community is also central to the idea of social capital, which is generated from community networks, belonging, cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual trust (Putnam 1993, 2000). Moreover, sense of community, like social capital, may be viewed as both an individual and collective resource that provides personal as well as communal benefits (Castle 2002).

"Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to a group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan & Chavis 1986, p9).

The McMillan & Chavis (1986) study shows that the strongest predictors of sense of community are expected length of community residence, satisfaction with the community and the number of neighbors identified by name. Their research revealed that psychological sense of community could be defined by the following four dimensions: 1) membership – feelings of belonging and sharing, 2) fulfillment of needs – integration and reinforcement, 3) influence – sense of mattering and making a difference, and finally 4) shared emotional connections – belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences. Furthermore, these dimensions are based on five factors: a) informal interaction with neighbors, b) safety – having a good place to live, c) pro-urbanism – privacy and anonymity, d) neighboring preferences – frequent neighbor interaction, and e) localism – opinions and desire to participate in neighborhood affairs. (McMillan & Chavis 1986).

Students of rural society have discovered that there is an increased psychological sense of community in rural areas over that of urban zones and that this increased sense of community (or gemeinschaft) is an integral part of the rootedness that is especially prevalent in the attitudes of rural people (Obst et al. 2002a, 2002b; Prezza & Constantini 1998; Turcotte 2005; Bell 1992). Research shows that a sense of belonging, intimacy and cohesion is present and maintained in rural regions adding to an overall positive sense of community (Coakes & Bishop 1996; Lev-Wiesel 2003). However, conflicting evidence is mentioned by Naples (1994, cited in Hoyt et al. 1995) in that there are decreases in a sense of cohesion amongst rural people because of a perceived diminished satisfaction with community life due to social isolation and hopelessness resulting in a loss of sense of control.

There is also suggestive evidence that identification with a community may be an important aspect of psychological sense of community and that civic community and organizations lend themselves to foster community cohesion and contribute to a resident's social and economic well-being, quality of life and self-identity (Fisher & Sonn 1999, cited in Obst et al. 2002a; Tolbert et al. 2002; Bramston et al. 2002).

It is probable that higher levels of sense of community exist in rural areas (Obst et al. 2002b). Therefore, it is possible that a convergence of rural and urban attitudes in this dimension will take place at a slower rate and over a longer period of time.

3.3 Summary

This chapter has attempted to amalgamate the views of past and present research concerning the experiential structure of place-communities, specifically in terms of Canada's rural areas – including the differentiation by degrees of rurality. The rural literature has, to some extent, shown that an operational model of experiential community character is possible, and unique and distinctive structures could span the Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains of rural social life similar to that of past urban studies. Insights drawn from the rural literature illustrate a trend towards convergence within several dimensions of community structure as well as highlighting a number of similarities that may be linked to the ideas set out in the social capital literature. This chapter has set the stage for the exploratory analysis of the empirical structure of rural residents' community experiences located in Chapter 5. The next chapter turns to the data and methodology employed to explore the questions of community structure, well-being and the differences in community experience by degree of rurality.

Chapter 4

Data and Methodology

4.1 Study Area

The empirical focus of this thesis is on rural community. The conceptual problem of defining "rural" was outlined in Chapter 2. One of the most commonly used definitions for rural social research in Canada is the Rural and Small Town (RST) definition (du Plessis et al. 2001). The RST definition essentially includes all geographic space outside of defined Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and Census Agglomerations (CAs). This space can be further differentiated according to the degree of influence these places experience from CMAs and/or CAs, since all Census Subdivisions in Canada outside of CMAs and CAs are classified according to Metropolitan Influenced Zones (MIZs). Thus, RST may include CSDs (municipalities and/or rural counties) that are in Strong, Moderate, Weak, or No Influence zones based primarily on commuting patterns or place of work-flows. The MIZ concept is therefore a surrogate measure for the *degree* of rurality. This study adopts the RST definition of rural, as it also allows for an exploratory analysis of the ways in which the experiential dimensions of place-community may differ within rural space by degree of rurality.

The study area was chosen with two objectives in mind: 1) to include a significant area of the rural hinterland surrounding the Lethbridge CA, so as to establish a basis for future comparison with previous research of this kind based on neighborhoods within Lethbridge, and 2) to include a range of different MIZ regions to ensure a variety of different degrees of rurality were included in the study. The chosen study area (Figure

4.1) encompasses a region in southern Alberta covering 17,025 square kilometers with a population of approximately 58,306 rural and small town (RST) residents surrounding the city (CA) of Lethbridge. There are 3,061 farms in the study area, which are dominated by the following three types: beef cattle farms (42%), wheat farms (13%) and grain and oilseed farms (15%). In particular, Lethbridge County supports the highest concentration of confined feeding operations (CFOs) in the province.

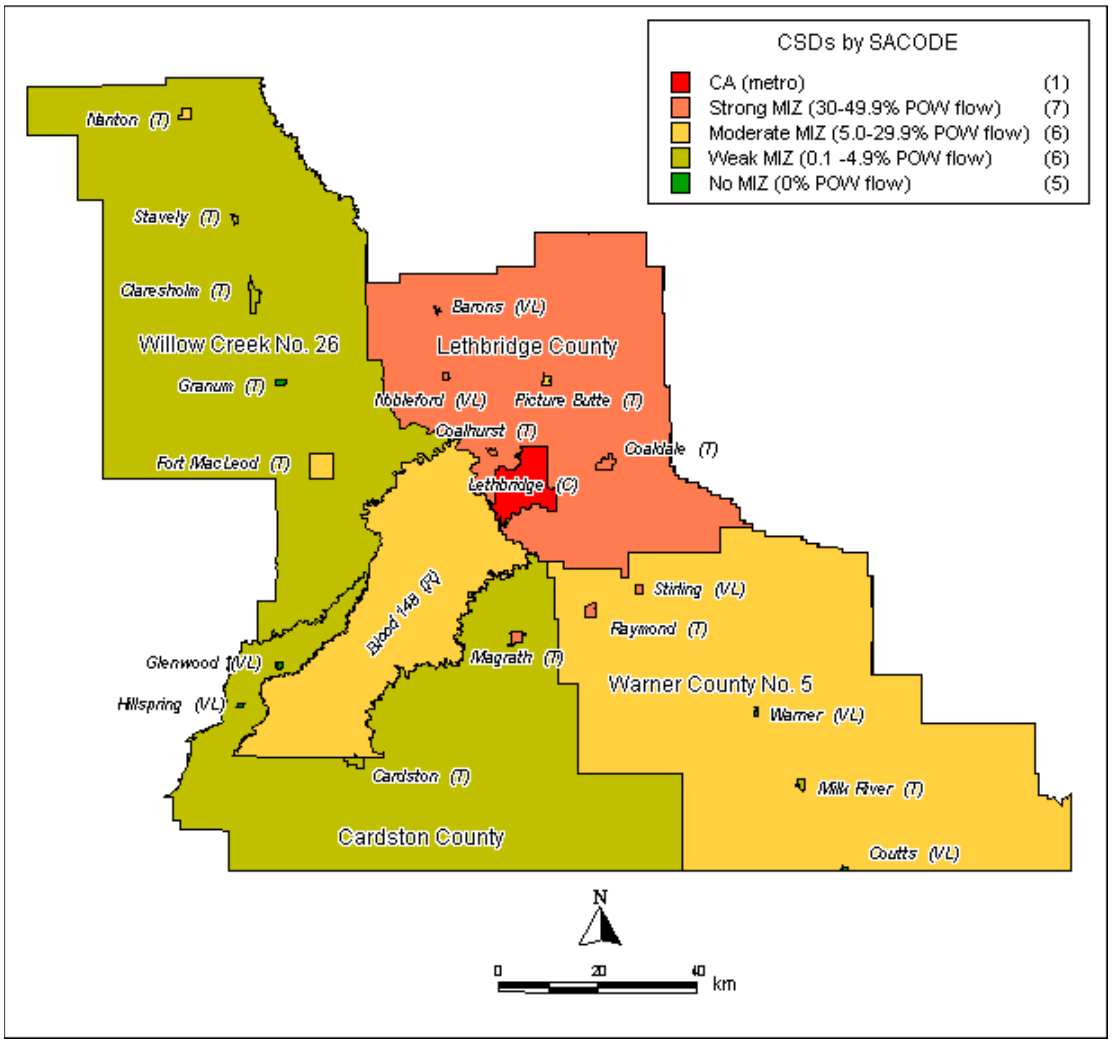

Figure 4.1 **Study Area: RST surrounding Lethbridge by MIZs (degrees of rurality)**

Agriculture is the primary industry of southern Alberta, which is also quite sparsely populated in order to support this industry (see Table 4.1 for details). These characteristics provide the backdrop for the stereotypical way of life often associated with rural people. But as we will see, that nostalgic lifestyle may in fact be a thing of the past and this study may help to shed some light on the idea of converging urban and rural lifestyles.

Table 4.1 Population Density and Land Area, 2001

Area Name	Population density/ square km	Land area in square km
Cardston County	1.3	3,416.20
Lethbridge County	3.5	2,838.80
Warner County	0.8	4,516.10
MD Willow Creek	1.2	4,560.40
TOTAL		**15,331.50**

Source: Statistics Canada

This is a relatively prosperous study area in which a high degree of corporatization of agriculture is evident. Figure 4.2 shows that the average household income in the study region is on par with the national average of $60,000 per year (Statistics Canada 2001).

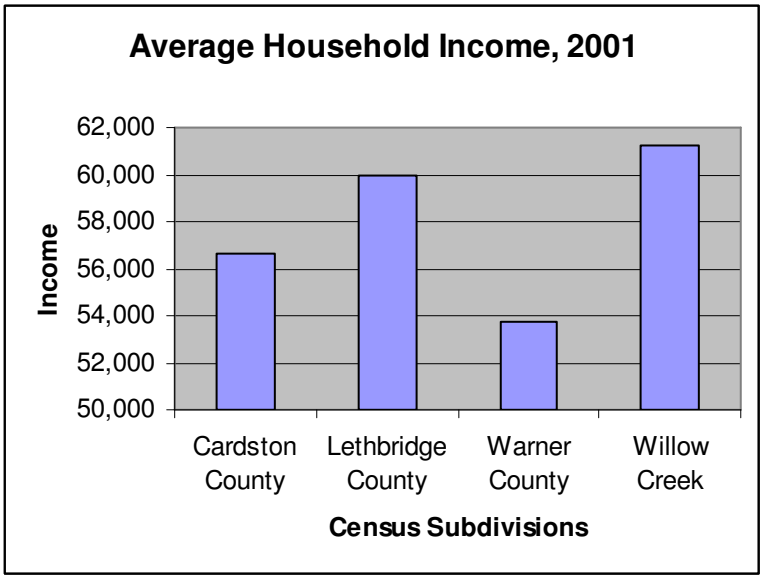

Figure 4.2 **Average Income in the Study Area**
Source: Statistics Canada

4.2 Data

Three distinctive types of data were obtained from a survey questionnaire of local residents (see Appendix A).

4.2.1 Data Pertaining to Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Features of Community Experience

Given that the experiential structure of local community is being operationalized as a set of behavioral, cognitive and affective features of place-based experience, the principal data set for this analysis was derived from a survey questionnaire designed to tap into these characteristics. The survey instrument originally designed by Townshend (2001) for use in urban neighborhoods formed the basis for the design of items to be included, but the instrument and included items were substantially modified. Every item was scrutinized and/or modified to ensure its relevance to the rural context of this study. In many cases revisions and re-wording of the questionnaire items were based on information derived from the extensive literature review of rural community (Chapter 3), and new items were added to the survey in order to tap into what the rural literature hinted might be potentially unique kinds of measures of rural experience – such as family and kin neighboring, mutual aid, environmental nuisances, and rural identity/symbolism.

A set of 53 variables was derived from these items. Some were based on single item scores, while others were derived as indices based on responses to multiple items. However, the variables were designed as potential indicators of what may be 19 separate structures of community experience as described in Chapter 3. Building upon findings from a number of separate studies (e.g. Townshend & Davies 1999; Townshend 2001,

2002) Table 4.2 summarizes the ways in which these variables were initially hypothesized to index the potentially unique behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions of place-community in the rural study area.

Table 4.2

Variables Used to Index Hypothesized Domains and Dimensions

DOMAIN/ Possible Dimension	CODE	LABEL	DESCRIPTION
BEHAVIORAL DOMAIN			
Facility Use (Activity)	rv1a	Distance to shopping	Distance (km) traveled to grocery store
	rv1e	Perceived No. facilities	Perceived No. of facilities in local area
	rv1g	Average facility use score	Total weighted usage of all facilities used in area
Informal Interaction	rv2d	Average neighboring interaction	No. of 10 nearest neighbors recognize, know by name, visit, and are friends
	rv2g	New friends	No. of 10 nearest neighbors who have become close friends
	rv2h	Neighbor support	Dependence on neighbors for support, socialization and activities
	rv2m	Index of change in visiting	Perceived changes in visiting neighbors
	rv2n	Family neighboring	Percentage of visiting with family neighbors
Mutual Informal Cooperation	rv3e	Average mutual aid	Frequency of asking neighbors for help in one month
	rv3j	Average mutual cooperative change	Perceived changes in neighbor assistance
	rv3m	Kin embeddedness	Dependence on family for support, socialization and activities
Organizations	rv4a	Organization volume	Membership in local voluntary organizations: No. of organizations
	rv4b	Organization dedication	Degree of involvement in organizations
	rv4c	Relative dedication	Relative dedication to organizations
Political Participation	rv5c	Overall political orientation	Frequency of voting in municipal, provincial and federal elections
	rv5d	Importance of voting	Perceived advantages of voting for individual and community
	rv5e	Maintain extra local ties	Degree of contact with individuals and organizations that may be able to help community
Supportive Milieu	rv6b	Average supportive milieu	Perceived community support of local government and non-government organizations and agencies

COGNITIVE DOMAIN			
Cognitive Mapping	rv8b	Average cognitive mapping	Perceived ability to map, locate and name places in local area
	rv8c	Perceived cognitive similarity	Degree to which others in the local area think of a similar name for the community
People Identity	rv9d	Rural identity	Perception that people in the community think of themselves as more rural than urban
	rv9e	Distinctive rural lifestyle	Perception that rural people believe that a rural lifestyle is distinctive from an urban one
	rv9h	Average people identity	Perceived similarity of age, wealth, behavior, appearance, ethnicity, rurality, and commonality
AFFECTIVE DOMAIN			
Place Symbolism	rv11a	Financial symbolism of place	Perceived degree of prosperity of local community
	rv11b	Status symbolism of place	Degree to which residence signifies financial success
	rv11c	Rural symbolism of place	Perceived degree to which outsiders consider community to be typical of rural places
Sentiment & Attachment	rv12a	Rootedness	Degree of attachment to area
	rv12b	Environmental attachment	Degree of attachment to area based upon physical environment
	rv12c	Social attachment	Degree of attachment to area based upon social relationships
Evaluation & Appraisal	rv13a	Relative satisfaction	Relative satisfaction with present community compared to others lived in
	rv13b	Relative desirability	Relative desirability of present community compared to others lived in
	rv13c	General evaluation of community	Average of relative satisfaction and relative desirability
	rv13e	Average personal community satisfaction	Degree of satisfaction with local community in general (facilities, programs, schools, income generation & physical appearance
Nuisances & Annoyances	rv14a	Social nuisances	Perception there may be elements of social disorder in the local community
	rv14b	Physical nuisances	Perception the physical environment of the local community may be subject to trash and vandalism
	rv14c	Environmental issues	Perception there may be environmental issues that negatively affect the local area
	rv14d	Corporate concerns	Perception of resistance to large-scale corporate farms
Safety & Security	rv15b	Average security	Perceived safety/security of local area or community
	rv15e	Trust	Believe people are essentially good and can be trusted
	rv15g	Suspicion index	Degree to which people in local community are friendly, supportive, welcoming and trusting
Empowerment	rv16c	Individual intrapersonal power	Personal power/influence in opposing unwanted development in the area
	rv16d	Individual interactional power	Group power/influence in opposing unwanted development in the area
Place Appearance	rv17a	Appearance rating	Rating of tidiness/maintenance of local community
Latent Involvement & Participation.	rv18b	Average latent aid	Expected willingness of neighbors to help out
	rv18c	Perceived change in reciprocal aid	Perception nowadays one must ask for help rather than aid being volunteered

Aesthetics	rv19a	Relative beauty	Rating of beauty of local community compared to others in study area
	rv19b	Unique perception of rural beauty	Perception that urban dwellers have a different sense of the beauty of the rural landscape
Common Values	rv20b	Average similar community values	Perceived commonality with neighbors about what is important in life and what is proper moral and social behavior
	rv20c	Newcomer values in rural communities	Perceived attitude that newcomers have different values than long-term residents of the area
	rv20d	Relative morality	Perception that 10 nearest neighbors have similar character and standards
Empathy & Belonging	rv21a	Belonging	Feeling that respondents 'truly belong' in the local area
	rv21b	Sense community	To what extent does the area provide a sense of community
	rv21d	Cohesion	Index of cohesion (average indicators: belonging, sense of community, feeling at home, loyalty to others, fellowship)

Source: Townshend, I.J. and Davies, W. K.D. (1999) "Identifying the Elements of Community Character: A Case Study of Community Dimensionality in Old Age Residential Areas" *Research in Community Sociology* 9: 219-251

4.2.2 Data Pertaining to Well-Being

The concept of well-being was described in Chapter 2. Previous studies have shown that urban communities or neighborhoods exhibit a high degree of spatial variation in measures of well-being and that, to some extent, these variations can be accounted for by selected dimensions of community experience (Townshend 2001). This thesis also studies this relationship and aims to understand if measures of well-being are differentiated within rural space, as well as the extent to which rural community structures can explain these variations of well-being in rural communities.

Based on the method described by Campbell et al. (1976), the survey instrument contained items required to measure the index of Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS) as well as the Index of General Affect (IGA), which are combined into a global measure called the Index of Well-Being (IWB). This has been shown to be a robust index (Campbell et al. 1976). It is also the same method used by Townshend (2001) to quantify well-being in the Lethbridge neighborhoods, and so for future comparison purposes it is a logical

extension to use the same measurement approach in quantifying well-being in the rural communities surrounding Lethbridge. The OLS is a single-item measure based on a seven-point Likert scale; whereas the IGA is the mean of an eight-item series measured on a seven-point semantic differential scale (Robinson 1998; Townshend 2001). The IWB, derived from the sum of these two measures, is a composite index ranging in values from a minimum of 2 (the lowest level of well-being) to a maximum of 14 (the maximum level of well-being).

4.2.3 Geo-Demographic Data

In addition to the community experiential indicators and the items required for the measurement of well-being, the survey instrument contained an array of geographic and demographic questions. Place of residence and postal code information were important for the subsequent coding of respondents to their CSD of residence as well as for assigning and aggregating respondents by the different MIZ categories. Age, education, household, family structure, tenure, and farm or non-farm designation data were also collected. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore detailed variations or differences in community structure or well-being by family, age or other demographic attributes, although where appropriate some of these implications will be referenced in the discussion of the results.

4.2.4 Sample Frame and Sampling Strategy

The sample frame consists of 17,349 (Statistics Canada 2001) RST households within the study area. A complete assemblage of all possible household mailing addresses

was not possible and is problematic in rural areas where many farm households retrieve mail from post office boxes in the nearest municipality. A self-selection approach to sampling was therefore considered. The sampling strategy aimed to obtain approximately 350 useable responses, which is a reasonable sample size to make inferences about very large populations. A sample size of n = 384 is required to make inferences about a large population with a 95% confidence level and a confidence limit of (+/-) 5% error (Dixon & Leach 1978). Budgetary considerations precluded a 'gunshot' mail-out questionnaire sent to all households in the region, so a more targeted approach was chosen.

The survey questionnaire was produced in two formats: a hard-copy printed form designed for mail-out and mail return, as well as a web-based version for online completion, designed to be administered through a third party fee-for-service survey hosting company (SurveyMonkey.com). Voluntary participation in the survey (using either format) was solicited using two different approaches:

1. Field visits to municipalities in the study area were made for the purposes of contacting local officials and non-profit organizations, explaining the survey and for posting advertisements in public places, municipal offices and in local business establishments. Some municipal officials also agreed to publish information regarding the survey in the local community newsletter or community newspaper. Information was provided in the brochures and newsletters on how to contact the researcher to obtain a hard-copy of the survey or on how to access the survey via the Internet.
2. The University of Lethbridge issued a press release outlining the nature and purpose of the study in October 2005. This resulted in a radio interview

(December 2005; CBC/Radio Canada; French Affiliate Alberta) and a front-page story about this research in the *Lethbridge Herald* newspaper (Tipper, November 14 2005). This newspaper has wide circulation throughout the study region, ensuring that most households in the study area were made aware of the survey.

The vast majority (96%) of respondents completed the web-based version of the survey. In hindsight, the sampling strategy used was not optimal as only 107 valid responses were obtained before the online survey was terminated after five months of exposure. Based on sample size equations this provides a 95% confidence level with a confidence limit of (+/-) 9.5% (Dixon & Leach 1978).

4.3 Methodology

Different methods and technical procedures were employed to empirically address the three distinctive objectives of the thesis outlined in Chapter 1.

The first objective is an exploratory analysis of the empirical structure or dimensionality of place-community experience for all respondents in the study area, as well as an empirical assessment of the levels of well-being found in these communities.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA), a form of factor analysis, was applied to a data matrix of n=107 cases by 53 variables. This is a commonly used method in such studies, as it is a data reduction technique that not only reduces complexity but also identifies underlying structure inherent in the data. PCA identifies a relatively small number of components or dimensions (factors) that can be used to represent sets of highly interrelated or correlated variables. These components essentially represent

mathematically distinctive constructs or dimensions, which can also be considered as 'composite' variables defined as an amalgam of related traits. They are mathematically distinctive because each component derived is orthogonal to every other, although some optional rotation algorithms such as Direct Oblimin allow the interpretation of partially correlated axes.

In this analysis, non-normality of some of the variables meant the PCA was applied to a matrix of Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficients, not the more commonly used Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients. This is not a common practice, but it has been used elsewhere and is in fact recommended in such cases (Davies 1984; Mearns et al. 2000) In practice, Pearson Coefficients applied to the *ranks* of the original data produce identical results, which is the technical procedure used here.

This analysis experimented with a range of different PCA solutions, using the default extraction criteria (i.e. Eigenvalue ≥ 1), as well as extractions with fewer or more components. Also, both orthogonal rotations (Varimax) and oblique rotations (Direct Oblimin) were investigated to determine which solution produced the most stable and interpretable results. Finally, for a variety of solutions, the utility of the separate variables was examined to ensure that the component solution was capturing the majority of the variance of the variables – or obtaining high communalites.

After settling on a 16 component Varimax solution, Component Scores were derived for every respondent, using the regression method of scores. Component Scores are essentially standard normal scores for each component. Hence, the method described above was used to identify the number and interpret the character of the separate components; and also to apply a standardized measure of every respondent on each of the

separate scales of community structure. Furthermore, for each respondent a single measure of well-being, the IWB, was derived from the items on the survey instrument.

The second objective is to test whether or not the *intensity* or *average traits* of these experiential structures, as well as levels of well-being, is differentiated within rural space, specifically according to the degree of rurality (MIZ regions) of the respondents. One-way ANOVA was the method used to examine these differences. However, before proceeding with this analysis every respondent had to be identified as belonging to a unique group or MIZ category. By geocoding every respondent's postal code to their CSD of residence, it was then possible to identify every respondent according to which MIZ category they were a resident of, since all CSDs are assigned a MIZ classification by Statistics Canada. ANOVA tests whether the means of the different groups (i.e. MIZ groups in this study) are significantly different. In this case, the analysis tests for: a) differences in mean Component Scores for each of the 16 dimensions extracted in the PCA analysis and b) differences in mean IWB scores, by MIZ category. Post-Hoc tests using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) tests were used to assess the significant differences between means. Once the ANOVA has determined that differences exist among the means, a post hoc test such as Tukey's HSD is able to determine which means actually differ. Essentially, Tukey's HSD measures the difference between each individual mean. Tukey's HSD determines how large the difference between the means of any two particular groups must be in order to be regarded as significant. This type of range test identifies homogeneous subsets of means that are not different from each other.

The last objective is to determine the extent to which community experience (community dimensionality) accounts for, or explains, observed variations in the degree of well-being amongst rural people in the study area. In short, it aims to measure the extent to which 'community matters' for well-being and what types of place-community experience are the key predictors of well-being in this rural context. Stepwise Multiple Regression (MR) is the technique used to investigate this relationship, in which the Component Scores on the 16 separate community experiential dimensions (i.e. independent variables) are regressed against the IWB scores (the dependent variable). Stepwise MR simplifies multiple regression equations and is a combination of forward and backward selection procedures. Forward selection begins with no predictors in the regression equation – the predictor that has the highest correlation with the criterion variable is entered into the equation first and the rest of the variables are entered into the equation depending on the contribution of each predictor. Backward elimination begins with all predictor variables in the regression equation and sequentially removes them. In Stepwise MR variables are removed from the model if they become insignificant as other predictors are added. Stepwise MR is different to other types of multiple regression because the number of predictors to be selected and the order of entry are both decided by statistical criteria – e.g. entry and removal criterion. For example, in standard multiple regression the researcher decides how many predictors to enter and all the predictors enter the regression model simultaneously and in a hierarchical multiple regression the researcher decides how many predictors to enter as well as the order in which they are entered (Robinson 1998; Spicer 2005).

4.4 Summary

This chapter has described the relevance and choice of study area and summarized the characteristics of the region. As well, it has outlined the logic behind the design of the survey instrument and items required to address the objectives of this thesis. Additionally, it has described the various kinds of data to be analyzed, and explained and justified the methods and technical procedures used in the analysis of this data. The next chapter examines the empirical results from this analysis and discusses the findings with reference to the objectives of the thesis in terms of the broader ideas and literature of community in rural settings.

Chapter 5

Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the empirical evidence of the study. The results and discussion are organized around the three major objectives of the empirical study.

5.2 Characteristics of the Sample

The sample represented a diverse group of people. Length of residence ranged from less than one year to 54 years, with an average of 15.3 years, and the majority (60%) were first generation residents. Home ownership was the dominant form of tenure, with 97% reporting they owned their own homes. In terms of place of residence, 31% lived on the farm, while 12% considered themselves rural non-farm. The majority (51%) considered themselves as "rural small town", while only 6% reported living in urban areas.

The demography of the sample was also diverse, with 46% males and 54% females responding. The age of respondents shows that the sample was relatively middle aged or mature adult. Only 4% were less than 40 years of age, 35% were aged 40-59, 48% aged 60-79, and 13% aged 80 or more. In terms of marital status, only 17% of the sample was single. The majority (74%) was married or else living common-law (5%). Only 3% were divorced, and only 1% widowed.

The size of households varied considerably, from 1-person to 14 persons. However, 44% of the sample lived in one or two person households, while another 38% lived in

three or four person households. Perhaps as a reflection of the age structure of respondents, childless households were quite common, with 41% reporting no children living at home. However, 38% reported one or two children at home, while only 21% reported three or more children residing at home.

Income and educational characteristics were also diverse and show a relatively well-off and well-educated sample. Only 3% of the sample reported gross household income below $20,000 per annum (p.a.), and only 21% reported incomes below $40,000 p.a. Almost half (48%) of respondents reported incomes in the $40,000 to $80,000 range. Nearly one third (30%) had incomes greater than $80,000 p.a. and 18% reported incomes greater than $100,000 p.a. The levels of educational achievement were also relatively high for a rural population. Only 2% had less than a high school diploma, while another 11% had achieved at least a high school diploma. About 27% reported some form of post-secondary education (non-university), while 61% had attended some university, with 38% having obtained one or more university degrees.

5.3 The Experiential Structure of Place-Community amongst Rural Residents

The rationale for the choice of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as the methodology for identifying the dimensional structure of rural place-community experience from the data set of 53 experiential variables was described in Chapter 4. In this case the PCA was performed using SPSS. There are two commonly applied techniques to help determine the optimal number of components or dimensions to extract in a PCA: Cattell's Scree Test and the 'step-change' in the magnitude of communalities (Davies 1984).

By default, most PCA algorithms stop the extraction of components at Eigenvalue 1.0. Eigenvalues measure the relative importance of each component extracted, but it is a measure that must be understood in terms of the number of variables in the analysis. Eigenvalues greater than 1 indicate that a component is accounting for more variance than a single variable in the analysis. Eigenvalues less than 1 indicate that the component accounts for less variance than one input variable; hence, the 'factoring process' is no longer achieving data reduction. This is why the typical default cut-off value in factor analysis is an Eigenvalue of 1. However, there is nothing sacred about Eigenvalue 1.0 and many have suggested that a more appropriate strategy is to look for a break in the slope of eigenvalues. This information is commonly shown in a Scree Plot (Figure 5.1).

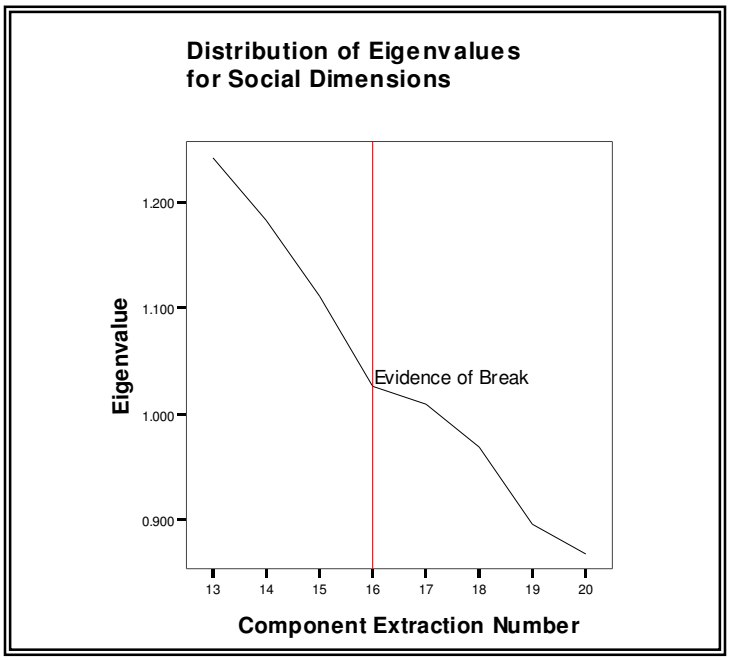

Figure 5.1 **Evidence of a Break via Cattell Scree Plot**

Figure 5.1 shows that the first major break of the slope in eigenvalues occurs after 16 components have been extracted. Extraction of a seventeenth results in a sudden flattening of the curve, such that the eigenvalue for the seventeenth component is only

marginally lower than that for the sixteenth component. Thus, the scree plot points to a 16-component solution as the optimal one.

The second method, which usually reinforces the evidence from the scree test, is an analysis of communalities. Communalities are the amount of variance of each variable that has been captured by all of the components extracted. As more components are extracted, the communalities of all variables will always increase. Usually, one is concerned to ensure that communalities are as high as possible and at least as high as 0.5, since a communality less than 0.5 means that the PCA solution has only captured less than half of the variance of a variable; hence, the variable is not particularly useful in the analysis. But there is a point where there may be signs of a major jump or 'step-change' in the magnitude of the communalities, indicating a type of stabilization. This information is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Justification for 16 Factors via Communalities

No. of Communalities ≥	Number of Components Extracted					
	14	15	16	17 (default)	18	19
0.1	53	53	53	53	53	53
0.2	53	53	53	53	53	53
0.3	53	53	53	53	53	53
0.4	53	53	53	53	53	53
0.5	51	51	52	53	53	53
0.6	40	**45**	**50**	**51**	52	52
0.7	28	**32**	**37**	**38**	43	46
0.8	11	13	13	15	19	24
0.9	2	2	3	3	4	5

Note: Total Variables = 53

It can be seen from Table 5.1 that extracting 17 components rather than 16 only marginally increases the number of variables with communalities greater than or equal to 0.5, 0.6 and 0.7. This signals that a 16-component solution may be more efficient. Comparing the 15-component solution to the 16-component solution shows that an

important ‘step-change’ seems to occur at 16 components. Extracting 16 over 15 components results in a fairly substantial increase in the number of the input variables that have communalities greater than or equal to 0.6 and 0.7. In other words, sixteen is a better solution because it has captured a lot of the variance of many more variables. This method also justifies the extraction of a 16-component solution.

The chosen 16-component solution accounts for 73.5% of the variance of the original data matrix and includes components ranging from 19.0% to 1.9% of the variance. The related eigenvalues and percentage variance information is given in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 **Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.089	19.035	19.035
2	3.711	7.002	26.037
3	3.202	6.042	32.079
4	2.957	5.579	37.658
5	2.369	4.469	42.127
6	2.068	3.902	46.028
7	1.980	3.736	49.764
8	1.818	3.431	53.195
9	1.750	3.301	56.496
10	1.599	3.016	59.512
11	1.479	2.790	62.302
12	1.393	2.628	64.929
13	1.242	2.343	67.273
14	1.183	2.232	69.504
15	1.112	2.099	71.603
16	1.026	1.936	**73.539**
17	1.009	1.904	75.443

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Two measures provide additional information on the acceptability of this model (see Table 5.3). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy uses partial correlations and simple correlations to explain the feasibility of the entire model. The closer the value is to 1, the better the model, since it means the partial correlations are

small. Because PCA looks for the connection of all the variables, a simple correlation is better because the area common to all the variables is larger. The value of KMO ranges between 0 and 1; a value over 0.6 indicates a large overlap and a large common area. The KMO value for this analysis is 0.623; thus indicating it is feasible to perform a PCA of this particular set of variables.

Bartlett's test of sphericity is a sensitive test of the hypothesis that the correlations in a correlation matrix are zero – that it is an identity matrix made up of 1's and 0's. The approximate chi-square value shows how far the particular model is from the identity matrix. Therefore, a large value for chi-square and a low significance indicates that the observed differences have not occurred by chance, suggesting it is viable to proceed with the PCA. This would then mean that the two tables are significantly different from one another. The approximate chi-square of this model is 2017.509 and the significance is 0.000; therefore indicating that the correlation matrix is unlikely to be an identity matrix.

Table 5.3 **KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		**.623**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. **Chi-Square**	**2017.509**
	df	1378
	Sig.	**.000**

A variety of rotation procedures, including Varimax (orthogonal) and Direct Oblimin (oblique), which enhance the interpretability of the component loadings, or the dimensional structure, were investigated. A Varimax rotation was chosen as a suitable rotation and since it is orthogonal, also ensures the components remain perfectly distinctive or uncorrelated. The rotated component loadings, which provide the main information necessary to interpret the structure and meaning of the separate dimensions, are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Component Loadings (Varimax Rotation, First Order Only)

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
rv21b: sense community	.860								
rv21d: cohesion	.836								
rv12c: social attachment	.821								
rv21a: belonging	.781								
rv15g: suspicion index	-.603								
rv12a: rootedness	.494								
rv13e: avg prsnl comm sat	.434								
rv13c: gen eval comm		.919							
rv13b: relative desirability		.877							
rv13a: relative satisfaction		.866							
rv2d: avg neighbo interact			.783						
rv2g: new friends			.717						
rv3e: avg mutual aid			.699						
rv9h: avg people identity				.890					
rv9e: distinct rural lifestyle				.831					
rv9d: rural identity				.804					
rv18c: prcv chng recip aid					.720				
rv18b: avg latent aid					.623				
rv5c: all political orient					.593				
rv5d: importance of voting					.533				
rv6b: avg supportive milieu					.361				
rv4b: organ dedication						.901			
rv4a: organization volume						.863			
rv1g: avg facility use score						.558			
rv5e: mntn extra local ties						.401			
rv3m: kin embeddedness							.716		
rv1e: prcv number facilities							.692		
rv2m: index chng visiting							.663		
rv3j: avg mutual coop chng							.573		
rv14a: social nuisances								.850	
rv14b: physical nuisances								.815	
rv15b: average security								-.480	
rv14c: environ issues								.325	
rv16d: indiv interact power									.801
rv16c: indiv intraprsnl pwr									.776
rv15e: trust									.401

Rotated Component Matrix (a) *continued*

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
rv11a: financial symbolism of place	.710						
rv11b: status symbolism of place	.709						
rv17a: appearance rating	.404						
rv20c: newcomer values in rural communities		.812					
rv20b: average similar community values		.523					
rv1a: distance to shopping		-.423					
rv2n: family neighboring			.639				
rv12b: environmental attachment			.636				
rv19b: unique perception of rural beauty			.591				
rv8b: average cognitive mapping				.576			
rv8c: perceived cognitive similarity				.533			
rv2h: neighbor support				-.354			
rv11c: rural symbolism of place					-.698		
rv19a: relative beauty					.645		
rv14d: corporate concerns						.590	
rv20d: relative morality						-.567	
v4c: relative dedication							.839

Note: All values < |0.3| have been suppressed

Rather than interpret and discuss these in terms of the order extracted, for the sake of linkage to the ideas presented in Chapters 2 and 3, these will be discussed in terms of the character of these dimensions with respect to the Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains of community experience.

5.3.1 The Behavioral Domain

This domain is expressively experiential and consists of the behavioral features based upon the interactions of people. Therefore, interacting with neighbors, belonging to organizations, using facilities, and helping out when required are typical of the behavior of rural people in this study area. Five of the components from the PCA analysis represent predominantly behavioral dimensions of community experience. The attributes of these dimensions and a short title, derived from an interpretation of the Component Loadings, are summarized in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Component Loadings and Interpretation of Behavioral Dimensions

Extract Order	Variable Code	Variable Titles	Component Loading (Varimax)	Title of Dimensions
3	rv2d	average neighbor interaction	0.78	***Neighboring/ Mutual Aid & Cooperation***
	rv2g	new friends	0.72	
	rv3e	average mutual aid	0.70	
5	rv18c	perceive change in reciprocal aid	0.72	***Politics & Latent Participation***
	rv18b	average latent aid	0.62	
	rv5c	overall political orientation	0.59	
	rv5d	importance of voting	0.53	
	rv6b	average supportive milieu	0.36	
6	rv4b	organization dedication	0.90	***Community Organizations***
	rv4a	organization volume	0.86	
	rv1g	average facility use score	0.56	
	rv5e	maintain extra local ties	0.40	
7	rv3m	kin embeddedness	0.72	***Social Change & Kin Embeddedness***
	rv1e	perceived number facilities	0.69	
	rv2m	index of change in visiting	0.66	
	rv3j	average mutual cooperative change	0.57	
16	v4c	relative dedication	0.84	***Volunteerism***

5.3.1.1 Neighboring/Mutual Aid & Cooperation

Indicator variables distinguishing neighboring interactions including friendships and mutual aid identify this dimension. Many rural studies (Jobes 1999; Smithers et al. 2004; Tevis 2000, Wright & Rosenblatt 1987) discuss the idea of neighboring and neighbor relations in terms of a declining penchant of neighboring behavior that is no longer applicable resulting in less supportive neighbors than the past would indicate, e.g. barn-raising and harvesting cooperatives. The urban studies of Davies and Herberts' (1993) postulated elements of community character identified these interactions as experiential features of behavior, informal interactions and mutual cooperation. Rural literature indicates that neighboring behavior in rural communities is a unique and distinct activity that may be one of the changing elements that at one time separated the rural from the urban. The positive component loadings (0.78, 0.72, 0.70) shown in Table 5.5 illustrate that all the variables are positively correlated and that each one in this component have relatively the same importance in defining it. Respondents with high positive component scores on this dimension therefore simultaneously engage in higher levels of neighboring interactions, have developed new friendship networks in their local community and, compared to others, provide high levels of mutual aid or assistance to their neighbors. However, the fact that neighboring interactions and mutual aid emerge as a unique dimension means that it is an important and distinctive structure of rural community experience – it is a unique way in which the rural respondents are differentiated.

5.3.1.2 Politics & Latent Participation

This dimension is defined by five variables that are positively associated with each other and provides a second distinctive source of behavioral differentiation in this study. The variables loading onto this dimension include: perceived change in reciprocal aid (0.72); latent aid (0.62); political orientation (0.59); importance of voting (0.53); and supportive milieu (0.36). These variables single out the respondents' behavior in terms of political activity and its importance to maintaining a sustainable rural lifestyle. People with high positive component scores on this dimension simultaneously have higher levels of perceived social reciprocity, a strong sense that neighbors are willing to provide assistance if need be, are politically active, and foster social and political ties that may protect the community in the event of unwanted development. These combined features mean that rural residents do perceive that in helping one another and banding together both politically and socially they are in an advantageous position in being able to sustain the lifestyle they believe to be important.

Politics & Latent Participation combined and factored into the Behavioral Domain of the rural study whereas they were separate and split between the Behavioral Domain and the Affective Domain (respectively) in Townshend's (2001) urban study. Moreover, *Supportive Milieu*, a separate dimension in the Behavioral Domain of the urban study blended into this dimension in the rural study. From the rural research a possible divergence in the dimension of *Supportive Milieu* was discovered. Rural communities form tighter communal bonds and foster higher levels of social capital in order to build an environment of support that may not be as apparent in urban settings (Coakes & Bishop 1996; Greiner et al. 2004; O'Brien et al. 1991). With this strong element of inter-

community support, rural residents then have the ability to force change in political structures that may affect their communities. Hence, this track of thinking may cause the dimension of *Supportive Milieu* being incorporated into *Politics & Latent Participation* in a rural setting.

5.3.1.3 Community Organizations

This unique source of differentiation amongst the rural respondents in terms of their community behaviors concerns the way in which they use local community facilities. It is defined by four variables that load onto this dimension: the dedication, or intensity of involvement, in local organizations (0.90); the number of separate organizations in which people participate (0.69); the frequency of usage of local community centers and other facilities (0.56); and the extent to which people maintain extra-local community social ties (0.40). Therefore, respondents with high positive component scores are highly involved in local community organizations, while those with negative component scores exhibit very little participation, membership or involvement in community-based organizations.

Compared to previous urban studies where organizational memberships and facility usage patterns were identified as separate structures (Townshend 2001, 2002), in this rural study the two are conflated into a single dimension. This means that in rural areas membership patterns and levels of formal involvement are inextricably linked to usage frequencies and patterns.

Rural lifestyles are possibly more compacted than urban lifestyles. This means that in a rural community there may be fewer facilities and more organizations, both formal

and informal. Rural residents tend to belong to many groups in their communities in order to maintain social ties. The maintenance of this type of social capital also utilizes the facilities in the community of which there may be fewer than in an urban community. In other words, living in a more 'isolated' community gives one the sense that there may be fewer things to do than in an urban setting, subconsciously directing people to lead quite active social lives. Rural people also feel directly responsible for their community and realize that if they do not work to make it a pleasant environment in which to live and socialize no one else will.

5.3.1.4 Social Change & Kin Embeddedness

Chapter 3 reported that an important and growing concern in the rural studies literature is the recognition by rural people that their communities have undergone a great deal of social change, that neighboring interactions were being eroded and rural people have become more kin-dependent than they were in the past (Tevis 2000; Hofferth & Iceland 1998; Meert 2000; Elder & King 1996). For this reason a number of separate items measuring such perceived changes in visiting patterns and reliance on kin rather than neighbors were included in the survey instrument. The results of the PCA analysis do in fact support the idea that this concept of social change and kin-embeddedness is a unique structural feature of rural community social life and behavior. This dimension is defined by four variables with positive component loadings: the extent to which people rely on family or kin rather than neighbors for mutual assistance (0.72); the perceived number of facilities in their communities (0.69); the index in change in visiting behaviors (0.66); and the extent to which there has been change in mutual cooperative or assisting

behaviors (0.57). Hence, respondents with high positive component scores on this axis have become more kin-embedded – relying less on their neighbors, visit less frequently with their neighbors than they did in the past, and are highly aware of the fact that there has been an important change in these types of social relations in their rural communities.

This demonstrates that family is an increasingly important part of the rural lifestyle but that these lifestyles may be changing. However, respondents indicated the changes in visiting patterns existed due to a lack of time in people's schedules and when time was available it was important to maintain existing family ties over non-family social ties. The issue of being 'time-starved' could be perceived as a decline in rural cooperative aid. Rural literature suggests that rural residents do not offer help anymore but rather have to ask for it (Tevis 2000; Hedley 1985; Meert 2000; Reimer 2004a; Wright & Rosenblatt 1987) – a point that seems to echo the urban stereotypes and which also suggests that this dimension may be a unique signifier of decoupling.

5.3.1.5 Volunteerism

Volunteerism is a unique structure of behavioral differentiation amongst the rural residents sampled in this study. The indicator variable of relative dedication encompasses the responses of the residents in their dedication to volunteer organizations and their frequency of volunteerism within their communities. The positive component loading of 0.84 explains that approximately 70% of the variance in this variable is captured within this dimension. This identifies that dedication to volunteer organizations and volunteering activities is still a very important feature of rural community life for some but not all – rather, rural residents are highly differentiated in their propensity to volunteer. The aspect

of volunteering was separate from individual involvement and participation in organizations and this dedication to organizations was relatively strong in this study area.

The element of volunteering was added to the rural study due to the popular social capital research presented in community studies today (Putnam 1993, 2000, 2001). Putnam (1993, 2000, 2001) deemed that volunteerism was a significant component to what he termed 'civic engagement' and he concluded that differing levels of 'civic engagement' was the social capital generated by a wide range of voluntary activities. He found that where there were high levels of voluntary participation there were also high levels of trust in others, strong expectations that other citizens will obey the laws, and widely shared perceptions that regional politics are largely free from corruption. In his major study, *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam documents in great depth the evidence showing that levels of civic engagement and voluntary participation have been in decline since they reached a peak in the 1960s. Putnam's work (1993) indicated a decrease in volunteerism within communities and it was hypothesized that one factor affecting this decline was an increase in age and socioeconomic decline of the cohort of regular volunteers. In general, Putnam (1993) found that levels of social capital were strongly correlated with a number of social consequences such as lower levels of violent crime, lower mortality levels and higher levels of education. However, the finding here of a unique dimension of *Volunteerism*, which indicates that it is a feature that differentiates rural people in terms of their scores or intensity of volunteering may also mean, in the context of Putnam's work, that not all rural people are contributing equally to the formation of social capital in their local communities.

5.3.2 The Cognitive Domain

This domain is concerned with how individuals think – their intellectual capabilities and their understanding of themselves, their neighbors, and their environment. These cognitive features also include how influential people believe themselves to be in terms of promoting and/or halting political and corporate agendas that may be taking place around them. Three separate dimensions of community experience within the Cognitive domain were identified from the PCA. The attributes of these dimensions and a short title, derived from an interpretation of the Component Loadings, are summarized in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Component Loadings and Interpretation of Cognitive Dimensions

Extract Order	Variable Code	Variable Titles	Component Loading (Varimax)	Title of Dimensions
4	rv9h	average people identity	0.89	***Rural Place & People Identity***
	rv9e	distinctive rural lifestyle	0.83	
	rv9d	rural identity	0.80	
9	rv16d	individual interactional power	0.80	***Empowerment/Trust***
	rv16c	individual intrapersonal power	0.78	
	rv15e	trust	0.40	
13	rv8b	average cognitive mapping	0.58	***Cognitive Mapping***
	rv8c	perceived cognitive similarity	0.53	
	rv2h	neighbor support	-0.35	

5.3.2.1 Rural Place & People Identity

A unique cognitive structure associated with an understanding of people's homogeneity/heterogeneity has been identified in urban studies of this kind (Townshend 2001, 2002). In this rural study, a number of items concerning the uniqueness of rural identities were also added to the survey instrument. The results of the PCA show that indeed a unique dimension of cognitive identity exists in rural areas and it is one that is simultaneously associated with rurality and rural lifestyle. Three variables define this component: the way in which people perceive each other to be socially homogeneous or

heterogeneous in terms of social class, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (0.89); the extent to which respondents understand that theirs is a distinctive rural lifestyle from urbanites (0.83); and the extent to which people have sense of place identity with the rural (0.80). Therefore, respondents with high positive component scores on this dimension all have a high cognitive awareness of social homogeneity in the communities – they believe they are similar, have a strong understanding that rural lifestyles are unique from urban, and have a strong identity with rural place. Conversely, some rural people do not have these attributes; although those with high negative component scores understand they live in a heterogeneous community, they do not believe rural lifestyles are distinctive and have only a weak perception of rural identity. This generally supports the rural literature, which emphasizes rural people and place identity as being important (Chapter 3), but it also reminds us that it is a particular source of differentiation of rural people in terms of their intensities of these traits.

5.3.2.2 Empowerment/Trust

Three of the 53 indicator variables are correlated to define a unique Cognitive dimension labeled as *Empowerment/Trust*: individual interactional power (0.80); intrapersonal power (0.78); and trust (0.40). Interactional power can be defined as the perceived ability of a united group of people in a political arena making a case against a common threat such as a questionable land development in their community; and intrapersonal power refers to an individual's perceived ability to personally contact local government officials in order to affect a questionable decision. The positive component loadings shown in Table 5.6 mean that these three variables are all positively correlated to define the broader construct of *Empowerment/Trust*, although the magnitude of the

loading for trust (0.40) means that it is not as important as the empowerment variables in defining this axis, since only 16% of the variance of this variable is captured within this component, allowing 84% of the variance to be spread over the remaining dimensions. This may be explained due to the fact that trust incorporates many factors relating to social relationships with family, friends and strangers, as well as concerns with personal safety issues. Hence, it would fit that characteristics of trust would be integrated into other dimensions.

The element of trust, much like volunteerism, is paramount to the building blocks of social capital (Putnam 2000). Discussions of social capital appear to be preoccupied with discourse relating to the amount of trust present within a society, touting that trust may be the most important element of social capital. Arguments are made that a high level of social capital promotes trust because trust is more widespread within closed, interconnected networks. On the other hand, there are those who contend that trust itself builds social capital because people are more likely to interact closely with those they trust. Cohen and Prusak (2001) argue that social capital consists of a stock of active connections among people; it is the trust, mutual understanding, shared values, and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities to make cooperative action possible. The basic premise being that the stock of active connections enables people to build communities. Hence, having a sense of belonging along with concrete experiences within these social networks in conjunction with relationships of trust are beneficial to a society. It is a consensus in *Democracy and Trust* (Warren 1999) that generalized forms of trust are central to the creation of social capital, cooperation and a robust civic life.

Trust, like many indicators, is a cultural as well as a social construction and is extremely subjective. A person's level of trust depends solely on their own personal experiences and is shaped by their cultural and social environments. For instance, in today's society fear is propagated by the media. Wuthnow (1999) stresses the media has powerful influential forces on the public that may affect people's perceptions, especially in the realm of institutions. For example, political scandals covered by media conglomerates dramatize a story and may negatively affect a person's trust in their government. Furthermore, this fear encourages mistrust and may lead to cynicism and a lack of cooperation amongst people and in turn communities. Age too may affect a person's level of trust. Life experiences mold a personality, and with that are embedded characteristics that allow a person the liberty to trust, or mistrust, those around them or the organizations that affect their lives.

Putnam's work (2000) also alludes to correlations between levels of education and levels of trust. For example, people with higher levels of education tend to have higher levels of trust. Moreover, socioeconomic status and levels of education also affect a person's point of view; optimism and pessimism are born of personal experiences and lifestyles. It could be said that trust is a piece of the puzzle connected to collective action and social capital, it provides a link for social interactions and associations, and in turn is a product of them. Trust is treated as a kind of social fact, a feature of collective action that is effective and, in principle, measurable. However, it should be kept in mind that there are those individuals who trust some people, in some situations, some of the time. We rely on trust in situations of uncertainty with others and it is this type of trust that makes everyday social action and interaction possible. Trust is both generalized and

highly situational; one draws on resources of trust routinely and often unconsciously, but always in the context of specific settings and social encounters.

It can be argued that trust between individuals may become trust between strangers, which then leads to trust of a broad fabric of social institutions. Ultimately, that interaction of trust could become a shared set of values, virtues and expectations within a society. It is the decay of such trust that researchers maintain is a catalyst in the decline of social capital in industrialized countries. Many researchers contend that building or rebuilding trust will consciously affect positive community relations and increase levels of social capital within a society.

An important difference observed in this dimension is the fact that *Empowerment* (a separate dimension in the urban research which emerged in the Affective Domain) *and Trust* (also an element in the Affective Domain under *Safety/Security* in the urban studies) factored into the Cognitive Domain and within the same dimension in the rural research. In the urban studies a sense of empowerment was defined as a 'feeling' that one had the power to change their communities (Townshend 2001). Whereas in the rural study empowerment seems to be considered more of a 'perception' – what they think they have the ability to do, as individuals and collectives to make changes in their communities. Furthermore, the literature suggests a convergence in the dimension of *Empowerment* is taking place between rural and urban areas. This decrease in a sense of empowerment that has been reported in rural settings (Peterson et al. 2005; Brooks 2005) may attribute to this change of domains in that a feeling of loss of power may have been replaced with the perceptions of what they – rural residents – could do if they absolutely had to. In addition, this rural study identifies *Empowerment* as a separate dimension and a

unique structure of community life in accordance with Townshend's (2001) past urban studies.

In the urban studies literature the element of *Trust* combined with suspicion and security within the dimension of *Safety/Security* contained in the Affective Domain. The rural research demarcated these elements into three separate and distinct dimensions. *Trust* became an aspect of *Empowerment*. Often rural residents consist of ageing populations that have lived their entire lives in the same place. These individuals perceive large urban centers as unsafe, dangerous places so in response they consider their communities as safe and the people helpful, caring and considerate (Miller et al. 1998; Ball 2001; Donnermeyer & Barclay 2005). Rural people perceive their communities to be safe and secure in contrast to the horrible events they see on their televisions every evening taking place in large metropolitan cities. Rural people believe they have the ability to keep their communities sheltered and relatively crime free which is a possible explanation for these two elements being combined in the Cognitive Domain.

5.3.2.3 Cognitive Mapping

Cognitive mapping refers to a person's mental representations of their environment. In a sense, they are map-like mental constructs that can be inspected by an individual in order to identify a perceived spatial relationship. Because these are 'cognitive' perceptions they may differ somewhat from reality but are, in truth, what an individual actually perceives as reality. As well, this mental image includes the perception of neighbor support and similarity amongst the people in a community. These views of behaviors and interactions of community members are included in one's cognitive reality

of their environments, and aids in the overall picture of the community in which they live. This is a construct of reality of which all people have the ability to place themselves when thinking about their environments and the people around them.

This dimension is defined by three variables. The positive loadings for average cognitive mapping skills (0.58) and perceived cognitive similarity (0.53) means that these two features are positively associated and both are inversely associated with the third variable, neighbor support, which has a negative loading (-0.35). The loading of this variable onto this component may be explained by returning to the original questionnaire. The question was asked as to "who(m) do you depend on most" and overwhelmingly the respondents chose their spouse/partner rather than close friends, family or neighbors. The respondents of this study indicated they rely on their spouse/partner more than anyone else but the perception of relying on their neighbors came through as a strong factor in the answers to this question. Thus, even though all three are important indicator variables of this dimension, we may conclude that cognitive mapping and similarity are the key indicators and neighbor support a minor player. Respondents with high positive scores on this dimension have strong cognitive mapping abilities, a strong perception that others in their community interpret their physical and social environment similar to themselves, and do not generally rely on neighbors for support. Conversely those with high negative component scores do rely on neighbors for support, but do not have strong cognitive mapping abilities or a strong perception of cognitive similarities amongst neighbors.

5.3.3 The Affective Domain

The Affective Domain concerns dimensions that relate to how people feel about their communities and their neighbors, as well as the extent to which they feel emotionally attached or rooted to these places of residence. Eight separate dimensions of community experience within the Affective Domain were identified from the PCA. The attributes of these dimensions and a short title, derived from an interpretation of the Component Loadings, are summarized in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Component Loadings and Interpretation of Affective Dimensions

Extract Order	Variable Code	Variable Titles	Component Loading (Varimax)	Title of Dimensions
1	rv21b	sense community	0.86	***Empathy/Belonging & Sense of Community***
	rv21d	cohesion	0.84	
	rv12c	social attachment	0.82	
	rv21a	belonging	0.78	
	rv15g	suspicion index	-0.60	
	rv12a	rootedness	0.49	
	rv13e	average personal comm. satisfaction	0.43	
2	rv13c	general evaluation of community	0.92	***Evaluation/Appraisal***
	rv13b	relative desirability	0.88	
	rv13a	relative satisfaction	0.87	
8	rv14a	social nuisances	0.85	***Nuisances/ Annoyances & Negative Externalities***
	rv14b	physical nuisances	0.82	
	rv15b	average security	-0.48	
	rv14c	environmental issues	0.33	
10	rv11a	financial symbolism of place	0.71	***Status Symbolism***
	rv11b	status symbolism of place	0.71	
	rv17a	appearance rating	0.40	
11	rv20c	newcomer values in rural communities	0.81	***Common Values***
	rv20b	average similar community values	0.52	
	rv1a	distance to shopping	-0.42	
12	rv2n	family neighboring	0.64	***Rural Environmental Attachment***
	rv12b	environmental attachment	0.64	
	rv19b	unique perception of rural beauty	0.59	
14	rv11c	rural symbolism of place	-0.70	***Aesthetics***
	rv19a	relative beauty	0.65	
15	rv14d	corporate concerns	0.59	***Corporatization/ Value Differences***
	rv20d	relative morality	-0.57	

5.3.3.1 Empathy/Belonging & Sense of Community

Sense of community, or psychological sense of community, is a unique affective experiential dimension that is identified in almost every urban and rural study that has measured such social features, although the types of indicators that define this construct may differ slightly from one study to the next. It is also typically one of the most important experiential structures to be isolated in terms of explained variance, as it is in this study where it is the first dimension extracted and accounts for most of the variance of the sixteen axes extracted (19.0%). In other words, this is also the most important source of social and experiential differentiation in the communities of southern Alberta. In this study, seven of the 53 variables are correlated to define a unique axis that has been labeled as *Empathy/Belonging & Sense of Community*. The indicator variables that identify this dimension include: sense of community (0.86); cohesion (0.84); social attachment (0.82); belonging (0.78); suspicion (-0.60); rootedness (0.49); and personal community satisfaction (0.43). Table 5.7 shows that all variables in this dimension, except the suspicion index, have positive component scores and so are positively correlated. All of these are inversely associated with suspicion, so really it is the absence of suspicion of neighbors that is the defining feature, which is linked to empathy, belonging and sense of community. Respondents with high positive component scores on this dimension therefore are not suspicious of their neighbors and have a very strong sense of community, sense of group cohesion and social attachment to their community, as well as deriving a strong sense of belonging and feel strongly rooted in their communities. Conversely, those with high negative scores are suspicious of their

neighbors but also have very low levels of sense of community, cohesion, belonging, and so on.

5.3.3.2 Evaluation/Appraisal

Chapter 3 outlined the ways in which experiential features – such as community evaluation and appraisal – may be distinctive, and suggested there may be declining levels of satisfaction and appraisal in rural communities today. In an urban study of Lethbridge, Townshend (2001) showed that these features were not a distinctive source of variation, but were conflated with the *Empathy/Belonging & Sense of Community* dimension. But, the empirical evidence from this rural study shows that the affective features of evaluation and appraisal are indeed a unique dimension of social and experiential differentiation. Three positive loading and positively correlated variables define this dimension: the general evaluation of community (0.92); relative desirability (0.88); and relative satisfaction (0.87). Respondents with high positive component scores on this dimension therefore rate their communities very highly, feel that their communities are highly desirable – relative to other places in the region or other places they have lived – and also exhibit a strong sense of satisfaction with their current residence location. But the fact that this is a unique component means the people surveyed are differentiated in this respect – those with negative component scores do not rate their communities highly and do not feel a strong sense of community desirability or satisfaction. So, while the general trend may be towards declining levels of satisfaction and desirability in rural life (Toth et al. 2002; Theodori 2001), it is not a universal feature in which everyone has the same affective outlook.

5.3.3.3 Nuisances/Annoyances & Negative Externalities

The urban studies literature has shown the social experience of nuisances, annoyances and negative externalities to be unique kinds of neighborhood social differentiation. Chapter 3 also showed that these types of problems may also be increasingly important in defining rural space and that rural-based nuisances may be escalating in concert with the trend towards agro-industrialization. Indeed the empirical results from the PCA analysis show that this is a unique dimension of community experience in rural southern Alberta. A separate *Nuisances/Annoyances & Negative Externalities* axis was extracted and defined by four variables. The key indicator variable in this dimension is social nuisances (0.85) followed closely be physical nuisances (0.82). These are the major features that define the meaning of this axis, although the experience of environmental problems/issues (0.33) also defines this axis. Inversely associated with these features is variable security (-0.48), which means that the more one experiences social and physical nuisances and environmental problems, the less secure they are about the safety of their community. Hence, respondents with high positive component scores are those that experience high levels of social and physical nuisances and environmental concerns, and are least secure about their communities; while those with high negative scores do not feel the effects of nuisances and are relatively secure in their communities. Since this is a unique dimension of social variation in this study, it is a clear sign that the rural study region is not universally considered to be a rural idyll, but that there are highly varied experiences of rural problems and negative externalities.

5.3.3.4 Status Symbolism

Many urban studies have pointed to the idea that, for some people, one's place of residence provides a source of symbolism, prestige and signifier to outsiders of material success. It is interesting to note that Davies and Herbert (1993) identified symbolism of place and place appearance as separate elements of community character, and in Townshend's (2001) urban study he also found the two were defined as discrete dimensions. But in this rural study these ideas join together to form a unique affective dimension called *Status Symbolism*. Table 5.7 shows this dimension is defined by three variables: financial symbolism of place (0.71); status symbolism of place (0.71); and appearance rating (0.40). These features are all positively correlated, so people simultaneously may feel that their community or address is a signifier of prosperity and their place of residence signifies to outsiders a level of personal financial success. It is generally these people who rate their communities as clean, tidy and well-maintained. In rural areas residents consider all of these elements intertwined; although the fact this is a unique dimension means that not everyone is the same, but are highly differentiated with respect to their feelings of status symbolism. Those with high negative component scores have a very low sense of status symbolism, while those with high positive scores do feel their communities are a status signifier.

5.3.3.5 Common Values

Differences in a feeling of common values and morality have been shown to be a unique affective feature of urban neighborhoods. Chapter 3 outlined a number of reasons why common values and morality may be very important in rural communities,

particularly if the rural population is relatively homogeneous. But the PCA results show that the rural respondents are not homogeneous with respect to feelings of moral similarity or value similarities amongst their neighbors. Rather, it is a unique affective dimension of differentiation, defined by feelings of perceived moral values amongst newcomers to the rural community (0.81) and by feelings of moral homogeneity amongst community residents (0.52). Those with high positive component scores on this axis are people who feel that rural newcomers create a moral imbalance because newcomers are seen to have very different value systems compared to the long-term residents, and also feel that long-term residents have a commonality in terms of what is considered socially or morally acceptable behavior and outlook on life. Conversely, those with high negative scores on this component do not believe newcomers to be all that morally different; they also do not feel that there is moral homogeneity amongst long-term residents. However, it is interesting to note that the distance to shopping feature (-0.42) is implicated in this outlook. Generally, the less one is a 'localite' in terms of shopping patterns the more they perceive a moral heterogeneity in their communities and the more they feel newcomers are not that morally different. These findings seem to reinforce the existing rural research which has identified a disconnect in the value systems and moral outlook of rural newcomers compared to long-term residents, as newcomers may simply be trying to consume a commodified and seemingly idyllic rural way of life.

5.3.3.6 Rural Environmental Attachment

Much of the rural literature emphasizes that amongst rural people there is a unique feeling of attachment to rural ways of life and the rural environment. The PCA analysis

confirms that this is also a unique dimension of affective variation in southern Alberta, but in this case it is also linked to a propensity to engage in family neighboring. This component is defined by three positively correlated variables with positive component scores: family neighboring (0.64); environmental attachment (0.64); and a unique perception of rural beauty (0.59). Those individuals with high positive component scores therefore exhibit a high frequency of neighboring with family but simultaneously report a very strong sense of environmental attachment to their rural surroundings, as well as a strong perception that their rural communities provide a unique kind of rural beauty. But quite consistent with the environmental and aesthetics literature, people vary considerably on these features. Hence, those with high negative component scores on this dimension have not only infrequent neighboring with family members, but a weakly developed sense of environmental attachment and a weakly developed sense of rural beauty in their communities. But the linkage of family factors with environmental attachment is intriguing in this study and has not been identified elsewhere. It signals that in this region, kin-based relationships are very much a part of the way people feel about their prairie landscapes.

5.3.3.7 Aesthetics

Chapter 3 summarized a number of rural studies that suggest rural areas may provide a unique kind of spiritual energy and aesthetic interpretation of landscape, which is manifest in important ways amongst rural residents. This seems to be the case in southern Alberta where the PCA analysis identified a unique affective dimension associated with rural aesthetics. This is distinctive from the environmental attachment dimension, and is

defined by variables that index the rural symbolism of place (-0.70) and the relative beauty of the landscape (0.65). This bipolar construct is intriguing because it shows that these two features are inversely associated, or negatively correlated. In other words, it is people with a weak sense of rural symbolism in the landscape that have a strong sense of the relative beauty of their environment; conversely, it is people with a strong sense of rural symbolism that exhibit a weak feeling of aesthetic beauty in the rural landscape. But together these features provide a unique source of variation amongst the sample, suggesting that the aesthetic interpretation of rural landscapes is certainly not homogeneous.

5.3.3.8 Corporatization/Value Differences

The last of the affective dimensions of community experience picks out a unique construct that has been suggested is a growing source of concern in rural areas. Chapters 2 and 3 pointed to the emerging problems of agro-industrialization, as well as the associated decoupling of community experience and the economic functions of farming. Interestingly, this last dimension is a reflection of this issue since it establishes that *Corporatization/Value Differences* are a real and significantly unique aspect of community experience. This bipolar axis is defined by two indicator variables: corporate concerns (0.59) and relative morality (-0.57). This means that these two features are inversely associated in their personal impact. Therefore, respondents with high positive component scores on this axis are those that have a strong feeling of resistance to corporate farm development in their area, but are also those that feel that their nearest neighbors (which may be large-scale corporate farms) do not share the same moral

standards as themselves. Others however, with high negative component scores, do not experience a sense of corporate concern and do feel that their closest neighbors (which may not be corporate farms) are morally compatible. However, the important feature of this finding is that the corporatization of agriculture does seem to be injecting a new and more complex kind of affective appreciation within rural communities, and does provide a unique way in which people are now differentiated in terms of their experiential aspects of rural community life.

5.4 Variations in Well-Being amongst Rural Residents

Chapter 2 outlined the concept of well-being and why there may be important linkages, which have been observed in studies of urban neighborhoods, between observed measures of well-being and people's experiences of place-based community. The survey instrument used in this study included the items required to measure the index of Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS), as well as the Index of General Affect (IGA), which Sarason (1974) has shown can be combined into a single measure of well-being – the Index of Well-Being (IWB). The IWB is a single measure that can range from a low value of 2 to a high value 14, indicating the maximum possible level of well-being captured by this index.

The results for the IWB measure shows that respondents ranged from IWB scores of 2 to 12. Thus, some people are completely dissatisfied with their lives and have the very weakest sense of 'General Affect'. Others however, exhibit very high levels of well-being, are highly satisfied with their lives and exhibit high levels of positive 'Affect', and are achieving about 86% of the maximum possible well-being captured by this index. On

average though, the rural people in this study exhibited relatively high levels of well-being with a mean score of 9.7 on the IWB. In other words, the typical respondent exhibits about 70% of the maximum level of well-being that can be captured by this index, but again it is important to remember that the rural residents are not homogeneous in terms of well-being – there is variability in well-being amongst the sample, with a standard deviation of 2.0.

Given that this study concerns the RST population surrounding the urban Census Agglomeration of Lethbridge, it is interesting to note that the average level of well-being in the rural population is lower than what has previously been identified in Lethbridge. Townshend (2001) measured the IWB for urban neighborhood residents in Lethbridge and identified a mean IWB score of 11.1 with a standard deviation of 1.9. Hence, the rural population exhibits a lower average level of well-being and also slightly more variability about this mean than the urban population. A one-sample t-test reveals that in this case the rural population has a significantly lower average than the urban population ($t = -7.1$, $p = 0.000$). In this sense, even if there are signs of convergence in rural and urban levels of well-being, in this case the urban and rural are distinctive. Nevertheless, given that there is variability within the rural communities, we still need to understand how the social experience of community life differs and how community experience itself may explain some of the observed variations in rural well-being.

5.5 Differences in Community Experience and Well-Being by Degree of Rurality

The second objective of the empirical study is to ascertain if the intensity or manifestation of the community dimensions, and the levels of well-being, varies by the

degree of rurality of the respondents – as represented by the MIZ concept. Chapter 4 described the rationale for the adoption of ANOVA as the preferred method to examine this question. Since every respondent is measured on every experiential dimension by a Component Score, which is essentially a standard normal score, the ANOVA is essentially testing for differences in the mean Component Scores of respondents residing in different types of MIZ regions. Although Chapter 2 described the various MIZ categorizations in Canada, in this analysis the 'Weak MIZ' and 'No Influence MIZ' were combined due to the poor response (n=3) within the zone of 'No Influence'. This yielded three categories for the respondents: strongly influenced (n=59); moderately influenced (n=19); and weakly or not influenced (n=25). The distribution of respondents by these categories is sown in Figure 5.2.

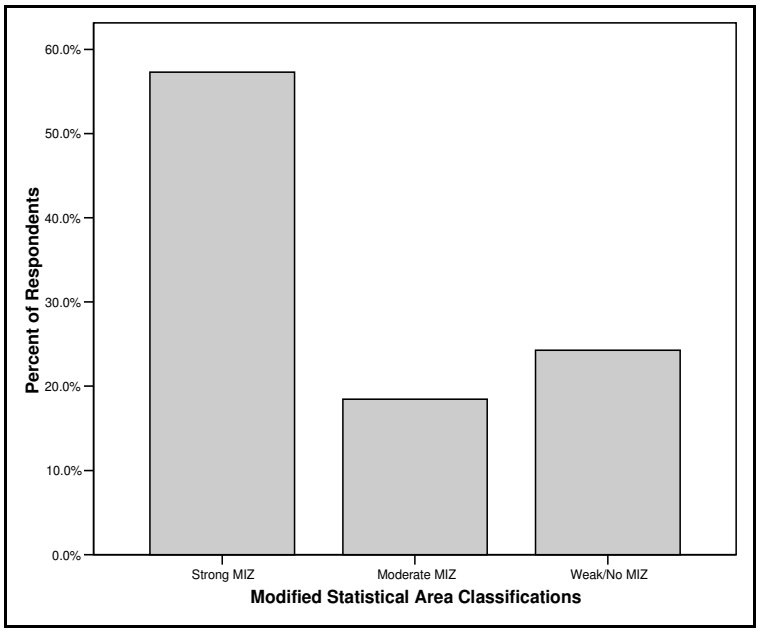

Figure 5.2 **Percentage of Respondents within each MIZ**

For each of the three MIZ classes used here, the mean Component Scores on the 16 dimensions of community experience, together with mean IWB scores, are given in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Mean Component Scores and Mean IWB Scores

Report

	Modified SAC					
	Strong MIZ (n=59)		Moderate MIZ (n=19)		Weak/No MIZ (n=25)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Empathy & Belonging (-L, +H)	-.14	.92	.40	1.23	.08	.97
Evaluation & Appraisal (-L, +H)	-.01	1.04	-.21	.81	.10	1.07
Neighboring & Mutual Aid (-L, +H)	-.06	1.07	.11	.59	.22	1.01
Rural Place & People Identity (-L, +H)	-.18	1.00	.25	.77	.29	.94
Politics & Latent Participation (-L, +H)	.02	.93	.03	1.10	-.08	1.09
Community Organizations (-L, +H)	-.11	.97	.19	1.05	.19	1.03
Social Change & Kin-Embeddedness (-L, +H)	-.09	1.08	.22	.91	.06	.95
Nuisances & Annoyances (-L, +H)	-.16	1.06	.37	1.02	.13	.79
Empowerment & Trust (-L, +H)	.00	.89	.04	1.37	.06	1.02
Status Symbolism (-L, +H)	-.09	.99	.28	.95	-.05	1.04
Common Values (-L, +H)	-.02	.86	-.11	1.29	.10	1.03
Rural Environmental Attachment (-L, +H)	.11	.84	-.70	1.04	.22	.98
Cognitive Mapping (-L, +H)	.14	1.02	-.16	.84	-.08	1.06
Aesthetics (- Rur Symb, + Beauty)	-.05	1.02	-.49	.88	.41	.80
Corporatization & Value Difference (-Rel Morality, +Corp Concern)	-.09	1.01	.28	.90	.03	1.09
Volunteerism (-L, +H)	.00	1.03	.12	.89	-.15	1.00
IWB: Index of Well Being	9.99	1.97	9.48	1.87	9.42	1.96

Note: -L indicates that negative component scores on the dimension has a low attribute of the dimension, and +H indicates positive component scores have a high attribute of the dimension.

It appears from these descriptive data that there are few major differences in the average expression of the community structures by level of MIZ. However, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) provides a more robust assessment of whether there is a significant difference between one or more of the groups being compared. Furthermore, if it is established that there is a significant difference overall, appropriate post hoc comparisons will determine which particular combinations of groups show those differences. Thus, it will be the analytical tool used to investigate how community differs by degree of rurality. To interpret the ANOVA test, we refer to the F-Ratio for the between groups variance, the bigger the F-Ratio the greater the likelihood of a significant difference between the groups. Table 5.9 illustrates the F-Ratio for the selected groups of data and the associated significance level. In this case, a significance level of 0.05 or less indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean component score, or Index of Well-Being, between at least one of the groups.

Table 5.9 F-Ratio and Significance Levels for the IWB

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Empathy & Belonging (-L, +H)	Between Groups	4.323	2	2.161	2.181	.118
	Within Groups	99.088	100	.991		
	Total	103.411	102			
Evaluation & Appraisal (-L, +H)	Between Groups	1.097	2	.548	.537	.586
	Within Groups	102.031	100	1.020		
	Total	103.128	102			
Neighboring & Mutual Aid (-L, +H)	Between Groups	1.502	2	.751	.772	.465
	Within Groups	97.257	100	.973		
	Total	98.759	102			
Rural Place & People Identity (-L, +H)	Between Groups	5.298	2	2.649	2.947	.057
	Within Groups	89.878	100	.899		
	Total	95.176	102			
Politics & Latent Participation (-L, +H)	Between Groups	.185	2	.092	.092	.912
	Within Groups	100.332	100	1.003		
	Total	100.517	102			
Community Organizations (-L, +H)	Between Groups	2.317	2	1.159	1.156	.319
	Within Groups	100.257	100	1.003		
	Total	102.575	102			
Social Change & Kin-Embeddedness (-L, +H)	Between Groups	1.492	2	.746	.718	.490
	Within Groups	103.889	100	1.039		
	Total	105.381	102			
Nuisances & Annoyances (-L, +H)	Between Groups	4.586	2	2.293	2.329	.103
	Within Groups	98.433	100	.984		
	Total	103.018	102			
Empowerment & Trust (-L, +H)	Between Groups	.078	2	.039	.037	.963
	Within Groups	104.372	100	1.044		
	Total	104.450	102			
Status Symbolism (-L, +H)	Between Groups	2.012	2	1.006	1.015	.366
	Within Groups	99.100	100	.991		
	Total	101.111	102			
Common Values (-L, +H)	Between Groups	.503	2	.251	.254	.776
	Within Groups	98.963	100	.990		
	Total	99.466	102			
Rural Environmental Attachment (-L, +H)	Between Groups	11.255	2	5.627	6.701	.002
	Within Groups	83.977	100	.840		
	Total	95.232	102			
Cognitive Mapping (-L, +H)	Between Groups	1.698	2	.849	.848	.431
	Within Groups	100.043	100	1.000		
	Total	101.740	102			
Aesthetics (- Rur Symb, + Beauty)	Between Groups	8.949	2	4.474	5.000	.009
	Within Groups	89.495	100	.895		
	Total	98.444	102			
Corporatization & Value Difference (-Rel Morality, +Corp Concern)	Between Groups	1.985	2	.993	.971	.382
	Within Groups	102.214	100	1.022		
	Total	104.199	102			
Volunteerism (-L, +H)	Between Groups	.815	2	.407	.408	.666
	Within Groups	99.862	100	.999		
	Total	100.677	102			
IWB: Index of Well Being	Between Groups	7.086	2	3.543	.933	.397
	Within Groups	356.810	94	3.796		
	Total	363.896	96			

The ANOVA results show that 14 of the 16 dimensions of community experience, as well as the IWB, show no significant (i.e. $p<0.05$) difference by degree of rurality or MIZ class. Only two of the sixteen dimensions of community experience exhibit some type of significant differences by MIZ. Both of these are relatively minor components, being the 12^{th} and 14^{th} extracted in the PCA analysis, and so are not as important as other experiential factors in terms of explained variance (2.6% and 2.2%). Both are within the Affective Domain of community life.

The first of these is what has been labeled as *Rural Environmental Attachment* (Component 12). It was defined by a series of three positively correlated community indicator variables that measure levels of family neighboring, environmental attachment and perceptions of rural beauty. Respondents with positive component scores have higher than average feelings of environmental attachment, perceptions of rural beauty and were also more family-oriented in their neighboring patterns. Conversely, those with negative component scores have lower than average feelings of environmental attachment, perceptions of rural beauty and are not as family-oriented in their neighboring patterns. The means and 95% Confidence Interval of this dimension for the three MIZ categories are shown in Figure 5.3.

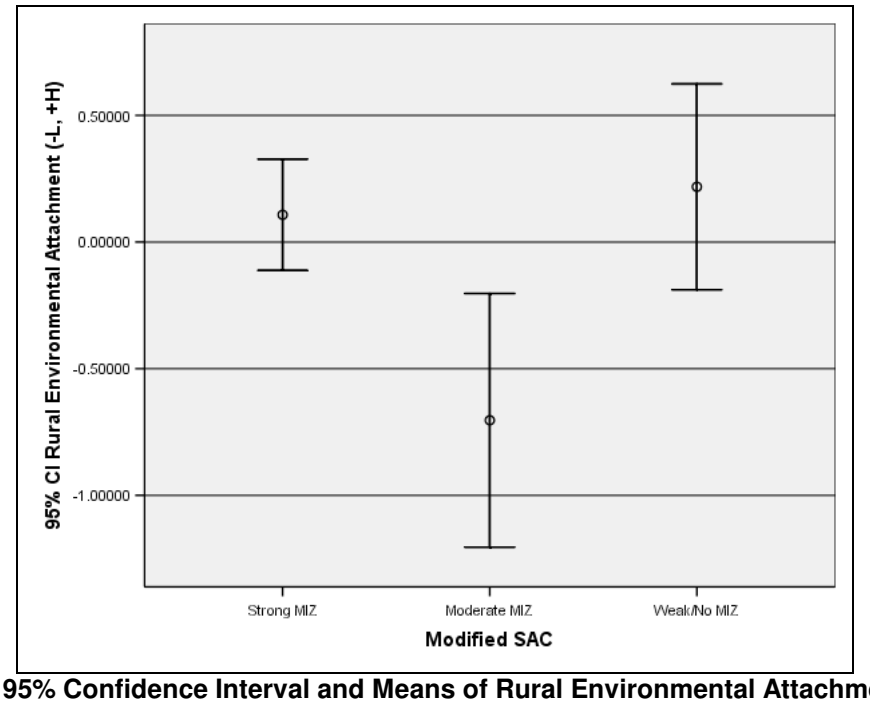

Figure 5.3 **95% Confidence Interval and Means of Rural Environmental Attachment**

The Post-Hoc tests (see Chapter 4) revealed that in this case the residents from the Strong MIZ and Weak/No MIZ classes form a separate homogeneous group, while those residing in the Moderate MIZ regions are a distinctive group. A closer examination of respondents by municipality and MIZ status shows that the vast majority (90%) of respondents residing in the Moderate MIZ category are from the towns of Picture Butte and Fort Macleod, so most of the real differences in the affective trait of *Rural Environmental Attachment* are linked to the attributes of these places. Neither of these places is particularly picturesque and both are central locations to a relatively extensive network of CFOs in their immediate hinterlands. This may be one important reason for the observed trend where people in these places have significantly less feelings of rural beauty, significantly lower feelings of environmental attachment and less extensive family neighboring patterns.

The second experiential dimension with some type of significant difference by MIZ category is Component 14, or what was labeled as the *Aesthetics* dimension. This bipolar dimension was defined by inversely correlated variables measuring the symbolism of rural space and the relative beauty of their areas. Hence, respondents with low *negative* component scores have *high* levels of symbolic meaning attached to rural space and very *little* sense of beauty of their environment. Conversely, respondents with high *positive* component scores have *high* levels of sense of beauty of their rural environment and very *little* feeling of rural symbolism in the places in which they live.

The means and 95% Confidence Interval of this dimension for the three MIZ categories are shown in Figure 5.4.

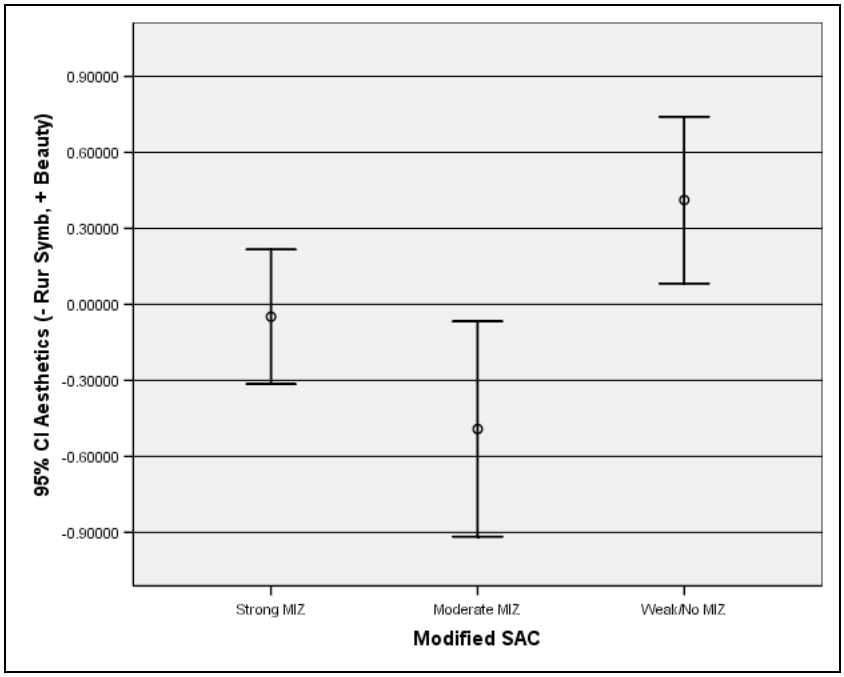

Figure 5.4 **95% Confidence Interval and Means of the Aesthetics Dimension**

The Post-Hoc tests revealed that there were two homogeneous subsets within this data, but these are not a simple assignment of distinctive MIZ classes to two groups. Rather, as shown in Figure 5.4, the Strong MIZ group overlaps with two other groups. In

other words, since the respondents from the Strong MIZ region are average in many respects (mean close to 0.00), they are split between the other two types. Hence, *some* of them that are below average are more aligned with respondents from the Moderate MIZ region, who in this case, exhibit negative component scores and thus experience a high degree of rural symbolism but a very low sense of rural beauty of their communities. On the other hand, some of them with positive component scores are more aligned with respondents from the Weak/No MIZ category, who in this case, exhibit a strong sense of rural beauty but little sense of symbolism of rurality in their place of residence. Regardless of this overlap however, the residents from the Moderate and the Weak/No MIZ regions are fundamentally different from each other in terms of the *Aesthetic* dimension.

It may seem strange that rural community experience does not differ by MIZ on the vast majority of behavioral, cognitive and affective features, nor on the observed average measures of Well-Being. In a social geographical sense this analysis therefore emphasizes that, with a few minor exceptions noted above, rural space is inherently similar in terms of the experiential structure and intensity of community-based social life and in terms of well-being. It points to a rather undifferentiated population across MIZ regions and seems to point to very high levels of social experiential *convergence* amongst rural folk; thereby challenging the idea that there may be unique sub-segments of rural society based on experiential topographies. It also poses some interesting questions concerning the utility of the MIZ concept as a conceptual classification that is meaningful for differentiating social life and experience.

The findings here do not necessarily condemn the MIZ classification system; however, it does open the door to uncertainties with the concept. For instance, MIZs could be indicative of commuter flows from rural to urban areas rather than social life in rural communities. The MIZ classification system leads one to believe there is a correlation between commuter flows, metropolitan influence and rural social behavior. However, this research illustrates this is not the case, at least in this study area. Therefore, MIZ classifications do not necessarily differentiate social space, which leads one to conclude that the rural geography of Canada requires further study so that one particular generalized definition of rural geographical space is not used in one broad brush stroke, painting the entirety of rural Canada the same color.

Many studies in the rural literature continue to emphasize that there is a gradient or at least a step-like function in which proximity to urban centers makes a difference in rural life; in other words, a gradient or step-like way in which degrees of rurality are expressed (Troughton 1995, 1999; Reimer 2005; Hummon 1986, 1990; Cloke et al. 1997; Jakle 1999; Theodori & Luloff 2000; Jobes 1999; Smailes 2000; Toth et al. 2002). This idea is implicit in the MIZ concept developed by Statistics Canada. But the empirical evidence reported above suggests that this concept may have little utility in differentiating rural Canada in terms of the experiential aspects of community life and also may not be an appropriate rural classification that effectively includes rural variations in well-being.

Given that the rural sample in this study is not really differentiated by MIZ class (with the two minor exceptions noted above), the next part of the analysis will treat all

rural residents together, and address the third objective – to determine how the experience of social life in rural communities explains or accounts for variations in well-being.

5.6 Does Community Experience Matter for Well-Being?

The third objective of the empirical study is to model the extent to which the experiential dimensions of community predict or account for variations in well-being, as measured by the IWB. In this case, the individual component scores on the sixteen separate behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions are regressed against the individual IWB scores. There are two features of this model that are of interest here: the identification of which of the specific experiential features are important predictors of well-being; and the extent to which these account for well-being.

Table 5.10 Regression Model Summary (Stepwise)

Model	R	R Sq	Adj R Sq	Std. Error Estimate
1	.383(a)	.147	.138	1.80755
2	.470(b)	.221	.204	1.73654
3	.521(c)	.272	.248	1.68788
4	.555(d)	.308	.278	1.65448
5	.585(e)	.343	.306	1.62150
6	.613(f)	.376	.334	1.58896
7	.637(g)	.406	.359	1.55848
8	.657(h)	.432	.380	1.53297
9	.678(i)	**.460**	.404	1.50322

Table 5.11 Coefficients for Index of Well-Being

Model	Description	Unstandardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error
9	(Constant)	9.772	.153
	Empathy & Belonging	.743	.150
	Politics & Latent Participation	.490	.154
	Evaluation & Appraisal	.404	.154
	Status Symbolism	.358	.155
	Community Organizations	.345	.153
	Empowerment & Trust	.344	.150
	Volunteerism	**-.372**	.154
	Rural Environmental Attachment	.345	.162
	Rural Place & People Identity	**-.340**	.160
a Dependent Variable: IWB: Index of Well-Being			

The stepwise multiple regression method results in a model in which only the significant predictors are retained. The results of the analysis show that in this rural study area only nine of the sixteen experiential dimensions of community are significant predictors of higher levels of well-being amongst the rural respondents. Although this is only a *subset* of the overall experiential and emotive variability of people in these communities, the fact that nine sources of community variation play a role in defining higher levels of well-being is important because it shows that community does matter for well-being, even though it means that only a subset of place-community is important. Furthermore, the regression model shows that there is no single domain of community experience that predicts well-being, but that a subset of behavioral, cognitive and affective features account for well-being.

In order to understand how these features come together to define higher levels of well-being, it is also important to interpret the signs of the regression coefficients with respect to the signs of the component loadings.

The regression model shows that three of the five behavioral dimensions are significant predictors of well-being. The first of these is *Politics & Latent Participation*. People with high positive scores on this dimension experience higher levels of well-being. In other words, well-being can be enhanced if people are able to develop a strong sense of latent mutual aid, have a strong political orientation – with high levels of political participation in both local and extra-local politics, and actively engage in behaviors to create a supportive milieu. The second of these is the *Community Organizations* dimension. Respondents with high positive component scores on this axis experience higher levels of well-being. Hence, well-being can be enhanced if rural people

are actively involved in many – rather than few – local community associations, are actively engaged in participating at high levels in these organizations (e.g. serving on the board of directors), and when they use these local community facilities on a more frequent basis. The third behavioral component to influence levels of well-being is the *Volunteerism* dimension. Individuals with high positive component scores on this axis exhibit very high levels of dedication and voluntary participation in their local communities. Therefore, the negative regression coefficient in the model shows that high levels of volunteerism may actually detract from achieving higher levels of well-being. In other words, lower levels of volunteerism are associated with higher levels of well-being. Although the social capital literature has emphasized the important role of volunteerism in generating community-based social capital, it has not specifically dealt with the role of volunteerism in establishing well-being. The quantitative approach taken here does not fully explain why volunteerism may cause lower levels of well-being, although it may be linked to the concept of volunteer burnout or stress. A more nuanced, qualitative approach would be required to understand more fully the circumstances surrounding lower levels of well-being and volunteerism in this study.

Two of the three Cognitive dimensions are significant predictors of the IWB. The first of these is *Empowerment/Trust*. The model shows that the higher the positive component score on this dimension, the higher the level of well-being. This means that individuals who have a strong cognitive awareness that as a community they either individually or collectively can make a difference, or unite to oppose unwanted development and change, are also those that trust one another. Their sense of empowerment and trust reinforces one another and can enhance levels of individual well-

being. The second cognitive feature of community experience to impact levels of well-being is the *Rural Place & People Identity* dimension. People with high positive component scores on this axis are those that have a strong understanding that people in their communities are very similar and easily identifiable, that their lives are defined by unique rural lifestyles, and who have a strong understanding and identification with rurality. In other words, they understand their communities to be relatively socially homogeneous and rural. But the negative regression coefficient in the model means that this type of cognitive understanding can *reduce* the level of well-being. It is rather, that people who have a greater understanding of social *heterogeneity* in their communities and who do not have a particularly strong rural identity that have higher levels of well-being.

Four of the eight Affective dimensions are significant predictors of IWB. The most important of these (and of all the experiential dimensions) is *Empathy/Belonging & Sense of Community*, a structure that is similar to what is more commonly referred to as 'psychological sense of community'. The results of the regression model show that the higher the positive score on this axis, the greater the level of well-being. This means that the ability to experience a strong sense of community, a strong sense of cohesion, social attachment, belonging, and rootedness in place, can enhance one's well-being. The second affective trait that defines well-being is what has been labeled as *Evaluation/Appraisal*. Higher levels of well-being are, in part, a function of the way in which people feel about their communities with respect to their global assessment of the place, as well as relative measures of the desirability of the community compared to others, and the relative satisfaction of their community compared to other places they may have lived. The third affective feature that predicts well-being scores is the *Status*

Symbolism dimension. There is a long-standing view in the urban studies literature that one's address is, for some people, an important part of their identity and signifier to outsiders of material success and well-being. The same appears to be true in rural southern Alberta, where high scores on status features are associated with higher levels of well-being. Respondents who have a strong sense that their place of residence is representative of their financial achievements and who believe that their residence is a signifier of status, are those with higher levels of well-being. The fourth affective feature to predict well-being is *Rural Environmental Attachment*. The greater the sense of attachment to the environmental aspects of their rural surroundings, and the greater the perception that there is a unique rural beauty, the higher the observed measures of well-being.

The second part of the model that is of interest here concerns the predictive or explanatory power of the regression model. This is particularly insightful, because it reveals not only how much the experiential structure of rural community is a source of well-being, but also how much of the variability in well-being is derived from non-territorial, or non-place, community factors. R-squared is the proportion of variation in the dependent variable explained by the regression model. The values of R-squared range from 0 to 1, with a value of 1.0 meaning that 100% of the variance in the dependent variable is accounted for, or explained, by the set of independent predictor variables. The significant nine predictor model ($R^2 = 0.46$, $p = 0.000$) means that 46% of the variation in well-being is accounted for, or explained, by a subset of nine of the sixteen community experiential structures. Thus, almost half of the individualized measures of well-being can be linked to the continued importance of the social aspects of place-community in

people's lives. The experiential and emotive topographies of rural life are therefore not trivial – they do significantly matter for well-being. However, the fact that 54% of the variation in well-being is not accounted for by rural place-community experience is also important. It means there are other non-territorial factors that are important drivers of rural well-being. Hence, for example, extended non-place social networks, family or kin relations beyond the community, religious affiliations, professional affiliations, and intra-family situational factors may be some of the ways in which ruralites derive additional well-being over-and-above what can be derived from the experience of place-community.

In summary, the regression results derived provide an insightful understanding of the continued importance and relevance of local experience to well-being, but they also reveal that a holistic understanding of rural well-being can only *partially* be derived from an understanding of the geography of community experience. Figure 5.5 is a conceptual representation of these findings.

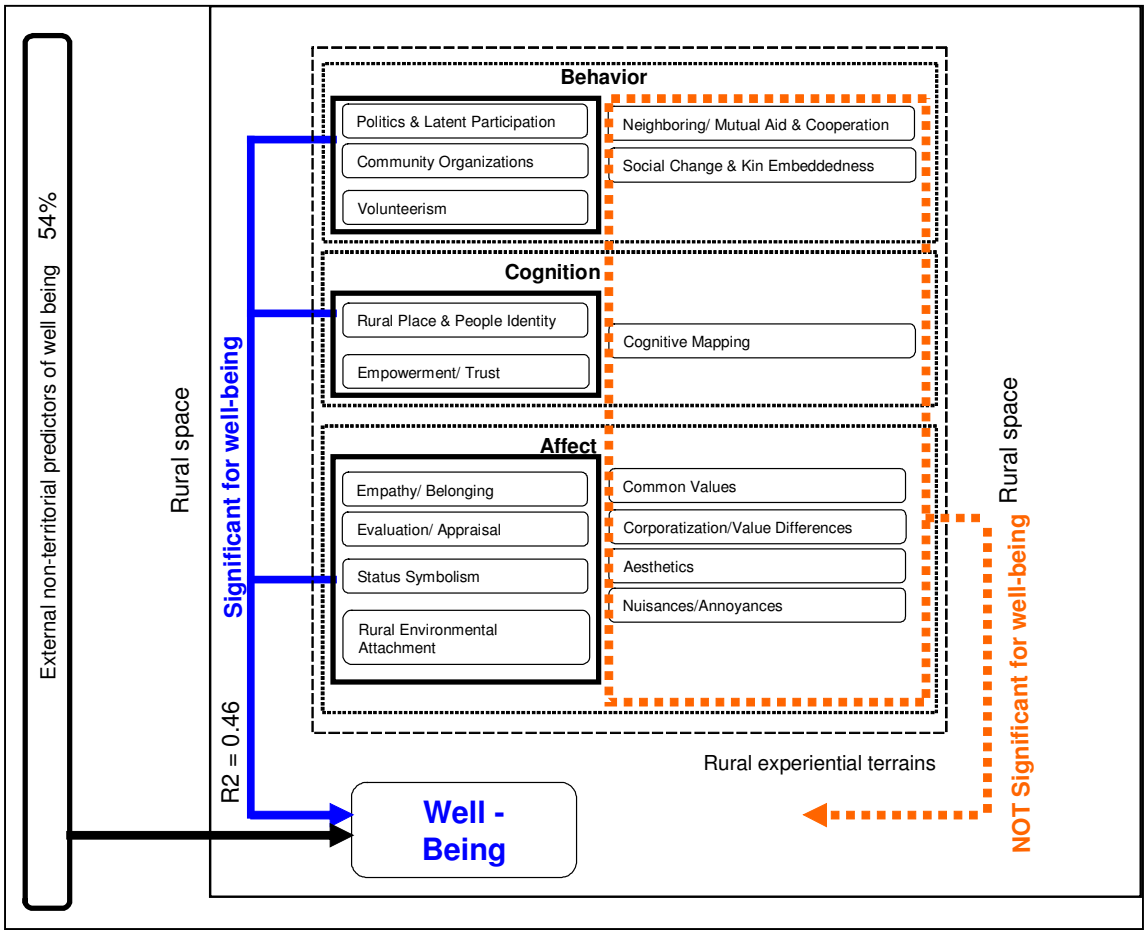

Figure 5.5 **Conceptual Representation of Well-Being**

5.7 Summary

This chapter has shown that the experiential character of rural community can be measured by sixteen unique dimensions of social variation, and that a range of different behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions are evident. As such, these findings seem to validate the general applicability of the model of community differentiation (Chapter 2) to rural communities in addition to urban communities. The findings also illustrate that many of these structures are remarkably similar in content and meaning to what has been found in urban communities, thus providing some support for the convergence thesis, but also that some of the rural dimensions are unique, so that convergence cannot be

considered complete. Nevertheless, the ability to differentiate rural people on sixteen separate scales of place-community experience is an important advance in our ways of measuring and understanding local rural social life.

This chapter also explored the ways in which the aggregate intensity of these experiential features, and also well-being, differ by the degree of rurality of the respondents. With the exception of two very minor differences, these experiential characteristics are not differentiated by the rural hierarchy as defined by the MIZ typology. Hence, either the MIZ typology is not a suitable rubric to capture social experiential aspects of rural life, or else the nature of rural social life has converged or become so similar that rural space in the study area is no longer differentiated by aggregate differences in the experience of community behavior, cognition or affect.

Finally, this chapter has examined and modeled the role that community social experience plays in defining or explaining rural well-being, and has shown how social geographers can isolate an important subset of community factors that continue to be significant for the enhancement of well-being. By showing how some aspects of community life still matter for well-being, as well as which aspects do not, it has revealed how particular elements of community combine to create a chemistry of community that enhances well-being.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, Implications and Directions for Future Research

6.1 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to provide a much needed empirical perspective on the nature of community experience in rural areas, as well as to explore the social and spatial variations in the ways in which these aspects of social life are manifest in rural southern Alberta. By building upon the literature and evidence of structural and technological change in rural society and economy, this study attempted to situate the conceptual and empirical work within the context of the decoupling debate, and the potential that decoupling has led to a type of convergence in the experiential character of rural and urban communities. In order to understand and measure the complex social dimensions of rural communities, an established urban conceptual model of place-community differentiation was adopted in order to focus attention on the Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains of community life that together comprise the experiential structures of community. This model has verified that community in rural areas is indeed a multi-dimensional concept with dimensions that span the Behavioral, Cognitive and Affective Domains. As well, it has shown that many of the rural dimensions are very similar to what has been discovered in urban neighborhoods (Townshend 2001, 2002).

But the objectives of the thesis were to go beyond a simple enumeration of the social dimensions that differentiate rural people in aggregate, and to understand how the intensities of these kinds of social experiences may differ by the different degrees or geographies of rurality in the region. The MIZ typology, recently developed by Statistics

Canada as a way of partitioning rural Canada into differing degrees of rurality, or metropolitan influence, was used to assess whether experiential aspects of community differ significantly. The findings in this regard are intriguing because they point to the possibility that either: a) the MIZ typology is not a particularly useful typology for segmenting rural space on social features, or b) that rural community life is fundamentally undifferentiated and does not systematically vary according to remoteness or metropolitan influence. Given that quality of life and levels of well-being in rural areas is an important counterpart to the decoupling argument, the thesis examined the role of place-community experience as a contributing factor to rural well-being. It has substantiated that community does matter for well-being in rural areas, just as it does in urban communities. But, it has also shown that the geographical input to well-being, in the sense of local community experience, is both partial and limited.

6.1.1 Experiential Dimensions

A number of separate urban studies have shown that there are unique behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions of place-community life. In the urban setting the 'structural complexity' of community experience has been shown to consist of about sixteen or seventeen unique factors or dimensions. In this rural study, a very similar kind of structural complexity is evident, since 16 dimensions were extracted. This means that rural social life (or the differentiation of rural social life) is not necessarily more simplistic or holistic than urban life. It is just as complex and just as multi-dimensional. But this study has also shown that the interpretation of these dimensions reveals both similarities (convergence) with urban life, as well as continued sources of uniqueness

(divergence) in rural settings. For example, a number of the experiential dimensions identified such as *Empathy/Belonging & Sense of Community*, *Common Values* and *Community Organizations* are very similar to urban contexts in terms of the types of indicators that define them. Therefore, on some aspects of social life structural similarity is evident. A comparison with the findings of Townshend (2001) for example, shows that in fact the majority of the dimensions identified here are very similar to what has been shown in urban neighborhoods, which reinforces the concept that a significant amount of convergence is evident. Perhaps then, ruralites and urbanites do not have completely separate lifestyles or views of the world, but their experiences of place-community are converging in an era of globalization, possibly due to the fact that there is no longer such a sense of isolation in rural areas as there may have been twenty years ago. With advances in transportation systems and the improvement of automobiles, as well as the reach of the media today, it is little wonder that people, no matter where they live, are becoming a more homogenous group with more in common than not.

However, there has not been a total convergence in experiential structure. On other features, divergence is still evident with unique kinds of rural dimensions of experience being identified. The findings here actually reinforce much of the recent literature on what may be increasingly important aspects of rural life. For example, features like *Social Change & Kin-Embeddedness* or *Corporatization/Value Differences* are unique experiential structures of community in rural community life, and may be representative of unique ways of experiencing the social and economic transformations taking place in rural areas. But in order to more fully understand the geography of convergence and/or divergence, this type of study will have to be replicated in other regions.

6.1.2 Differences By Degree of Rurality

With the exception of two very minor differences, this analysis revealed no real discernable differences in the experiential structure of rural communities by degree of rurality as defined by Statistics Canada's MIZ classification system. However, it is important to consider the scale of the study area, which represents a microcosm of rural communities throughout Canada. But, the findings raise two important issues or questions with respect to the geographical understanding and interpretation of community, and to the understanding of the geographical variability of rural space. The first issue concerns the possibility that the MIZ classification has not paid sufficient attention to including social and experiential factors in its definition. Although the primary variable used to classify MIZ regions is place of work-flows, with the aim of partitioning space according to metropolitan influence, this does not seem adequate when it comes to a typology of rural *social space*. Given that there are sixteen separate structures that differentiate the social experience of rural residents, it might be expected that a useful classification of rural space in Canada would capture subtle differences in these experiences. But the current MIZ classification system does not reveal any such aggregate differences.

The second issue may have nothing to do with a problem in the MIZ typology. It may simply mean that in reality the aggregate community experience is not fundamentally different according to degree of rurality. This is the finding of this study, which shows no substantive variation. This however, is particularly important with respect to the conceptual framework of convergence. It shows a particular type of convergence – that is convergence within, and between, rural areas! From a geographical

perspective, it identifies a rural geography that is essentially socially undifferentiated. The ability to substantiate the argument of rural community life becoming more alike and undifferentiated according to remoteness or degree of metropolitan influence will require additional research and replication in other regions.

6.1.3 Well-Being

An undercurrent of the decoupling argument is that it may have fractionated the formerly holistic social life of rural communities and hence, threatened the well-being of rural residents. Given that this thesis has established that there is an empirically identifiable structure of community experience in rural regions, the final aim of this study was to examine the ways in which this community experience still matters as a determinant of rural well-being. The findings revealed two important conclusions. First, they showed that place-based community experience does matter for rural well-being, since nine of the sixteen structures of community experience are significant predictors of well-being. This supports the extant research that has found a strong link between well-being and increased social involvement, attachment, sense of community, sense of belonging, and social ties (e.g. Miller et al. 1998; O'Brien et al. 1991; Prezza & Constantini 1998; Smith et al. 2001), and that positive experiences in social lifestyles are key predictors of life satisfaction and positive well-being in rural areas (Glendinning et al. 2003). They confirm, for example, Richmond et al.'s (2000) findings that personal life, community and environment are all contributors to high levels of well-being in rural residents. It is likely that the continued linkage between community and well-being in

rural areas will enhance the ability of these residents to establish locally based social capital (Putnam 2000).

But the findings of this study also served to isolate the particular subset of community experience that is the real generator of higher levels of well-being for rural people. By isolating the particular types of behavioral, cognitive and affective traits of rural social life that define well-being, the study also provides valuable information on those features of rural community experience that are not linked to well-being.

The second important conclusion shows not simply that community is significant for well-being, but just how significant. In this study almost half (46%) of the variation in well-being is attributable to the impact of selected features of local community experience. This means that the experiential milieu of rural social space, in which human agents engage in social behaviors, develop cognitive awareness and experience affective emotional linkages, is integrally bound up with the realization of a substantial share of well-being. It is understanding how these features come together to define the elements or chemistry of community that is important for the future understanding of rural well-being and in identifying ways in which it may be enhanced. But these findings cannot be exaggerated because they also show that in the highly connected and potentially converging rural social landscape, people are not completely dependent on their local communities in terms of realizing well-being. The majority (54%) of the variation in measures of well-being is derived from sources that are external to the experience of place-community. Therefore, place matters, but only in a partial context. Hence, a more holistic understanding of rural well-being will require that future research simultaneously

considers both the impact of local community social life, as well as the ways in which external factors act as determinants of well-being.

6.2 Implications for Community Development

This research has enhanced the understanding of the experiential structure of the lifestyles of people who reside in rural communities. The results from this study could be used by local non-profit organizations and development agencies to put in place programs and services that would aid in bolstering local participation and cooperation, which in turn would help in the development of sustainable communities that would invite newcomers, as well as a place where people may chose to stay or return to at some point in their lives.

The results from this project could aid non-profit community organizations to look at their capacity to create social environments that allow for the most effective utilization of community development resources in rural areas. For example, facility use was found to correlate with the use of community organizations – so preservation and improvement of local facilities could promote supplementary use by locals, and perhaps encourage additional organizations to arise and become active in the community. Furthermore, these findings clarify the roles that social networks and social capital play in the success of community improvement efforts. For instance, knowing that higher levels of community attachment and belonging results in increased social networks and social capital helps local municipal governments in their decision-making process. The insight gained from this study could also generate new ideas about how to involve both non-profit and public sectors in successful community development and community building efforts, and in

turn, this type of social policy could determine how a community allocates its resources as well as how it protects and promotes members of the community, individually and collectively, in order to achieve the goal of community sustainability.

6.3 Directions for Future Research

Rural geography seems to be in the midst of trying to reinterpret the meaning of rural amidst a great deal of structural and technological change. This study has provided a limited and empirical perspective on this issue. It has examined only one study region and is based on evidence from a relatively small sample of 107 people; therefore some caution must be taken in making inferences about these results in other areas or geographical regions. If progress is to be made in understanding the new complexities of rural social environments, researchers need to verify that these kinds of structures of community experience can be identified elsewhere, and compare how and why these may differ from one region to another to produce different types of experiential topographies. Future research also needs to explore ways in which typologies, classifications and spatial boundaries of rural space can effectively capture differences in the behavioral, cognitive and affective features of social life, not simply distance or commuter flow gradients. Finally, considerably more work is required to understand the role of rural society and rural social experience in defining the geographies, geographic potential and geographic inequality in rural well-being, and in identifying programs and policies that can sustain and enhance the quality of life of rural people in Canada.

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Appendices

Appendix A Rural Community Survey

Community Social Life and Well-Being: A Survey of Rural Communities

University of Lethbridge

Lisa Hungerford, M.A. candidate and
Ivan Townshend, Ph.D.

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University of Lethbridge
4401 University Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada
T1K 3M4

Please return the completed questionnaire
using the self-addressed envelope included.

Community Social Life and Well-Being: A Survey of Rural Communities

1) Introduction

This survey is part of a larger research project that aims to further our understanding of the differences in community social life and well-being in rural communities, and to understand how rural communities differ from urban places. This study is part of a Masters thesis research project being carried out by Lisa Hungerford in the Department of Geography at the University of Lethbridge, under the supervision of Dr. Ivan Townshend. This questionnaire has been designed to explore people's sense of well-being, their perceptions and feelings about their life and society, their community-based social interactions, and the way these different factors might interact. A range of rural settings in southern Alberta are being surveyed so that we can better understand how local communities affect people's lives. This study is in no way linked to any firm or commercial organization and no firm/ commercial organization will have access to the questionnaire responses.

2) Confidentiality

Your responses will remain **completely confidential**. All information received will be combined and individual responses will not be identified. However, if you have concerns about confidentiality, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Ivan Townshend at the number given below. A unique code number has been placed on the rear cover of this booklet; this is simply to identify how responses may vary within different geographic regions.

3) Ethics

This survey includes a number of relatively personal and reflective questions. It is the aim of this research to fully comply with commonly prescribed policies for social research, such as the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. This questionnaire has been reviewed and approved by the University of Lethbridge Human Subject Research Committee. Please note that ***you are free to withdraw from this study at any time***, and that by returning the questionnaire you **consent** to participating in this study.

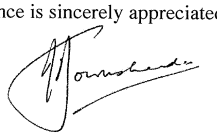
4) Instructions

The questionnaire is divided into six sections. Please ***answer all of the questions in sections A, B, C, D,*** and ***E***. ***Section F is optional***, and has been provided for you to make additional comments. Instructions are provided with each question on how to mark your responses. If you select certain responses you will notice by an arrow (e.g. ➔) that more information is required. Please complete these sub-questions before moving on to the next question. The questionnaire will likely take about 45 minutes to complete, but you may take as long as you like to complete it.

5) Additional Information

If you would like additional information about this study, or if you have any comments or concerns, please feel free to contact us for further details. Queries of a more general nature may be addressed to the Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge at (403) 329-2431.

Thank you for participating in this study. Your assistance is sincerely appreciated.



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SECTION A
YOUR RESIDENCE AND COMMUNITY AREA

A1) How long have you lived at your current location?

_____ months
_____ years

Including your current residence, how many **different residences** have you lived in during the **past 10 years**?

A2) Prior to living at your present location, where did you live?

- ❍ Less than 10 km (6 miles) from where you now live
- ❍ In the same county but more than 10 km away
- ❍ In a different county but same province
- ❍ In a different province
- ❍ In a different country

A3) What is your current **Postal Code**?

_ _ _ _ _ _

A4) Do you currently **RENT** your residence? ❍ NO ❍ YES

If No, for how many generations has your family owned this land?

A5) Do you consider your **residence** to be:

- ❍ Farm
- ❍ Rural Non-Farm
- ❍ Rural Small Town/ Village
- ❍ Urban

What size is your farm?

_____Acres **or**
_____Sections

In what Township and Range is your farm?

Twp _____
Range _____

A6) Think of the area you would define as your **local community**. What is the **name** of this area?

A7) When **you** think of the **name** of your local community, does this **name** bring to mind some kind of **image** or **emotion**? (for example: *spaciousness, seclusion, remote, friendly, etc.)*

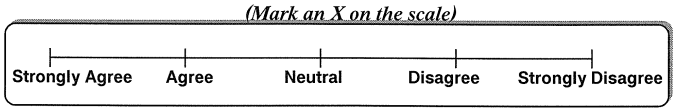
❍ NO ❍ YES

What is the image or emotion your community area has for you?

A8) On the scale below, rate how strongly you **agree** or **disagree** with this statement:

"Most people in my area think of the same name and boundaries when they describe this community."

(Mark an X on the scale)



A9) **Without** looking at a map, how easy do you think it would it be **for you** to:

(Place an X in one space on each line)

	Very Easy	Easy	Unsure	Difficult	Very Difficult
a) **Draw a map** of the boundaries of what you consider to be your community?	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
b) **Name** all of the **highways and/ or roads** within this boundary?	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
c) **Accurately locate** the nearest **gas station**?	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
d) **Accurately locate** the nearest **grain terminal**?	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
e) **Accurately locate** the nearest **post office**?	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

SECTION B
YOUR LIFE AND SOCIETY

B1) How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? ***(Put an X in one space only)***

❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Completely Dissatisfied			**neutral**			**Completely Satisfied**

B2) Here are some words and phrases which we would like you to use to describe how you feel about your present life. For example, if you think your present life is very "boring", put an X in the box right next to the word "boring". If you think your present life is very "interesting", put an X in the box right next to the word "interesting". If you think it is somewhere in between, put an X where you think it belongs.

(Place an X in one box on each line)

boring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	interesting
enjoyable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	miserable
useless	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	worthwhile
friendly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	lonely
full	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	empty
discouraging	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	hopeful
disappointing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	rewarding
brings out the best in me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	doesn't give me much chance

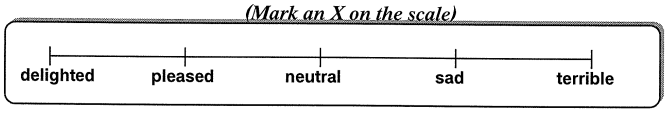
B3) To what extent do you **agree** or **disagree** with **each** of the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) The most fulfilling things I have done in my life have been those which I have done by myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) I get very little personal satisfaction by doing things with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) I prefer to spend my time doing things with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) I often enjoy being by myself more than being with other people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
e) The most fulfilling things in life can only be achieved when people join together with common goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
f) It is better that the interests of the majority come before those of any individual.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

SECTION C
PLACES, FACES, AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY

C1) Think of the **area** and the **name** you previously described as your local community. How would **you personally feel** if for some reason you **had to move away** from this community next month?

(Mark an X on the scale)



C2) **Compared** to all other communities or neighbourhoods you have lived in, **how satisfied are you** with the area you are **now** living in? ***(Put an X in one space only)***

- ❍ **much more satisfied** with this community than any other community I have lived in.
- ❍ **a little more satisfied** with my present community.
- ❍ **no more or no less satsified** with this community than any other community I have lived in.
- ❍ **a little less satisfied** with my present community.
- ❍ **much less satisfied** with this community than any other community I have lived in.
- ❍ **not applicable,** I have always lived in this community.

C3) How **satisfied** are you with your community in terms of the following:

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Completely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Completely Satisfied	No Opinion
a) as a place to raise a family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) medical/ health care services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) senior citizens' programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) youth programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
e) recreation programs and facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
f) local shopping facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
g) local schools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
h) opportunity to earn an adequate income	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
i) overall physical appearance of the community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

C4) **Compared** to all other communities you have lived in, **how <u>desirable as a place to live</u>** is your **present** community? ***(Put an X in <u>one</u> space only)***

- ❍ **the most desirable** of all communities I have lived in
- ❍ **a little more desirable** than other communities I have lived in
- ❍ **no more or no less desirable** than other communities I have lived in
- ❍ **a little less desirable** than other communities I have lived in
- ❍ **much less desirable** than other communities I have lived in
- ❍ **not applicable,** I have always lived in this community

C5) Do you feel there is any resistance to, or conflict over, large-scale corporate farms (owned by a single entity with a number of employees) in your local community?

❍ NO ❍ YES ⇨ On a scale of 1 to 5, how much opposition?

1 2 3 4 5
not much extreme

C6) How much do you **<u>agree</u>** or **<u>disagree</u>** with **<u>each</u>** of the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) My 10 nearest neighbours seem to be very similar in terms of their age, their appearance, their wealth, and their behaviour.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) People that belong to my community are easily recognizable by their ethnic or cultural background.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) People that belong to my community are easily recognizable by their style of clothing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) People in my community consider themselves more rural than urban.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
e) The lifestyle of rural people in this region is distinctive from the lifestyle of urban people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
f) People in my community have a common sense of identity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

C7) On the scale below, rate how strongly you **agree** or **disagree** with this statement:

"I believe that people are essentially good and can be trusted."

(Mark an X on the scale)

Strongly Agree — Agree — Neutral — Disagree — Strongly Disagree

C8) Do you think there are signs of social disorder in your community? (for example: *drunken behaviour, youth disturbances, illegal garbage dumping, trespassing, poaching, etc*)

❍ NO ❍ YES ⇨ On a scale of 1 to 5, how much of a nuisance is this?

1 2 3 4 5
not much extreme

C9) Are there features of the physical environment of your community that you find to be a nuisance? (for example: *blowing trash, vandalism, etc*)

❍ NO ❍ YES ⇨ On a scale of 1 to 5, how much of a nuisance is this?

1 2 3 4 5
not much extreme

C10) Are there any environmental issues that negatively impact your community or are a source of annoyance in your community? (for example: *water pollution, excessive noise caused by large trucks, intensive livestock operations, stray animals, wild life*)

❍ NO ❍ YES ⇨ On a scale of 1 to 5, how much of annoyance is this?

1 2 3 4 5
not much extreme

C11) How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) I feel safe alone after dark in my local community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) My community is generally a very safe and secure place in which to live.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) I often fear for my own personal safety if I am alone in my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) I fear my house will be broken into or my property vandalized.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
e) I feel safer in my community than I would living in a large city.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
f) I think there is more crime in my community now than there was 10 years ago.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

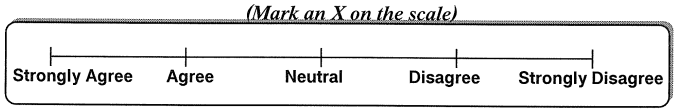
C12) Compared to other communities in southern Alberta, how would **you** rate **your own** community in terms of its ***beauty*** or ***visual appeal***? ***(Put an X in one space only)***

❍ amongst the five most beautiful and visually appealing
❍ above average
❍ average --- no more or less beautiful or visually appealing than others
❍ below average
❍ amongst the five least beautiful

C13) On the scale below, rate how strongly you **agree** or **disagree** with this statement:

"People from large cities would have a very different sense than my own about the beauty of the landscape surrounding my community."

(Mark an X on the scale)



C14) In general, how would you describe the people living in your community?

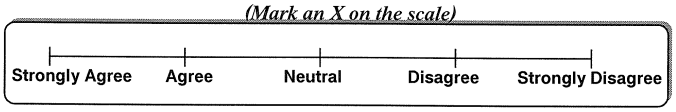
(Place an X in one box on each line)

Friendly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unfriendly
Supportive	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Indifferent
Welcoming	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Distant
Trusting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-Trusting

C15) On the scale below, rate how strongly you **agree** or **disagree** with this statement:

"I feel a sense of attachment to my community because of the physical or natural environment of the area." (for example: *views, landscapes, etc*)

(Mark an X on the scale)



C16) Suppose some development was being planned in your community that you and your neighbours resent because you feel it would have negative consequences. If you wanted to prevent the development from going ahead, how much **power and influence** would you have in the final decisions if:

(Place one X on each line)	**Basically powerless**	**Might have some influence**	**Certain to have some influence**	**A great deal of influence**	**Can control the decision making process**
a) you personally contacted local authorities to express your opposition.					
b) you personally contacted your political representatives to express your opposition.					
c) you and your neighbours united to contact local politicians to prevent the development.					
d) you and your neighbours took political/ legal action at a meeting of county council or the Development Appeal Board.					

C17) Outsiders think my local community is economically:

(Put an X on one space only)

- ❍ Very prosperous
- ❍ Moderately prosperous
- ❍ Average compared to other areas in the province
- ❍ Struggling

C18) When family or friends look at your home and community, what impression do you think they are likely to get?
(Put an X on one space only)

- ❍ you are financially better off than you were before
- ❍ your financial situation has not changed for some time
- ❍ you are financially worse off than you were before

C19) On the scale below, rate how strongly you **agree** or **disagree** with this statement:

"I think that 'outsiders' would consider my community to be typical of rural places on the Prairies."
(Mark an X on the scale)

Strongly Agree — **Agree** — **Neutral** — **Disagree** — **Strongly Disagree**

C20) How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with **each** of the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) If I asked my neighbours to watch my house and yard while I was away on vacation they would be pleased to do it for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) I never ask any of my neighbours to help me with anything because I feel they would only help because they felt obliged to.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) Residents of this area always seem willing to help each other out.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) Nowadays people have to **ask** neighbours for help whereas in the past neighbours **volunteered** to help.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

C21) In your opinion, how **tidy** and how **well maintained** are the houses and yards in your local community?
(Put an X in one space only)

- ❍ very tidy and very well maintained
- ❍ somewhat tidy and relatively well maintained
- ❍ mixed in terms of how well or poorly they are maintained
- ❍ somewhat untidy and relatively poorly maintained
- ❍ very untidy and very poorly maintained

C22) How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with **each** of the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) I think I agree with most people in my local community about what is important in life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) People in my local community have very similar ideas about what is socially and morally correct or incorrect behaviour.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) I find some people in my local community whose lifestyles and values I find offensive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) Newcomers to this community seem to have very different values than mine.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

C23) Imagine your 10 or so nearest neighbours. What do you think of their character and standards compared to other people in this region? ***(Put an X in one space only)***

- ❍ they seem to have the **highest** of moral standards
- ❍ they have **higher** moral standards **than most**
- ❍ they are **no different** to others in their moral standards
- ❍ they have **lower** moral standards **than most**

C24) How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with **each** of the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) I feel that I truly 'belong' in this community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) Living here gives me a sense of community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) I don't really feel at home in this community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) I feel loyal to the people in my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
e) A feeling of fellowship runs deep between me and other people in my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
f) My social relationships within my local community give me a strong sense of 'rootedness' in the local area.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

SECTION D
ACTIVITIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

D1) How far do you usually travel to do **MOST** of your grocery shopping? ***(Put an X in one space only)***

- ❍ less than 2 km
- ❍ 2 to 5 km
- ❍ 6 to 10 km
- ❍ 11 to 20 km
- ❍ 21 to 40 km
- ❍ more than 40 km

D2) At what **kind** of store do you purchase **MOST** of your groceries? *(For example: small family owned store or supermarket)*

D3) How **often** do you usually travel to this store?

- ❍ once a month
- ❍ once a week
- ❍ more than once a week

D4) What **percentage** of all of your shopping is carried out in:

- ❍ your own rural community _____ %
- ❍ some other rural community _____ %
- ❍ an large urban community _____ %

Total = 100%

D5) Of the following kinds of **facilities** located in your rural community please indicate how often you typically use or attend activities in them.

(Place one X on each line)

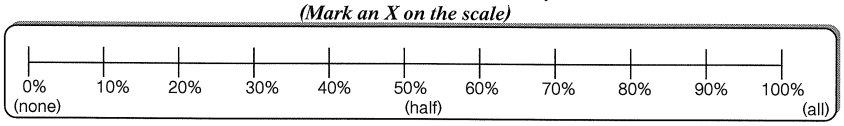
	Facility is not in my area	Never	Less than once a month	Once a month	Twice a month	Three times a month	Four times a month	Five or more times a month
a) convenience store								
b) church								
c) library								
d) community hall								
e) recreation / sports facility								
f) medical clinic								
g) golf course								
h) post office								
i) other (specify) _____								

D6) Think again of your 10 closest neighbours.
How many of these neighbours would you say you personally

(Place one X on each line)	None	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 or 8	9 or 10
a) recognize when you meet?						
b) sometimes talk to?						
c) know by first name?						
d) visit at least once a month?						
e) consider close personal friends?						
f) feel able to discuss intimate personal problems with?						

D7) What percentage of your close friends live within 0-10 km (0-6 miles) of your residence?

(Mark an X on the scale)

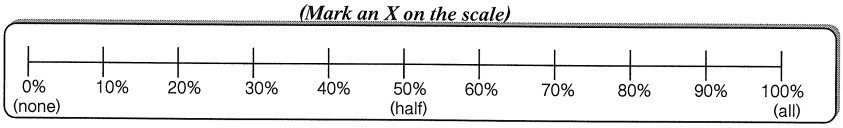


D8) How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with **each** of the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) I'm so busy nowadays I don't have time to visit my neighbours.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	○
b) People in my community don't visit with neighbours as much as they did in the past.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	○
c) Over the past 10 years my frequency of visiting with neighbours has declined.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	○

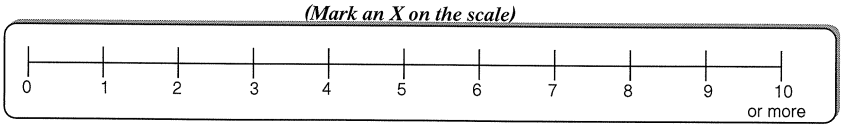
D9) What percentage of your visiting with **neighbours** involves visiting with your own **family**?

(Mark an X on the scale)



D10) While living at your present location, how many of your **10 nearest neighbours** have become **close personal friends**?

(Mark an X on the scale)



D11) How many times **in the <u>past month</u>** have you

(Place an X on each line)	None	1	2	3	4	5 or more
a) borrowed anything from a neighbour?						
b) gone into a neighbours' house?						
c) asked a neighbour for advice or information?						
d) asked a neighbour to physically help you?						
e) chatted with a neighbour by telephone?						

D12) Who do you think is most important to you, or who do you depend on most, for the following:

(Place an X on each line)	Spouse or partner	Other family members	My close friends	Neighbours
a) companionship and social support?				
b) sociability (social activities)?				
c) help with everyday kinds of activities?				
d) help in times of crisis?				

D13) How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with **<u>each</u>** of the following statements?

(Place an X in one box on each line)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) People in this community don't depend on each other, nor do they provide assistance to each other, like they did in the past.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	○
b) People are more reluctant to help each other than they were in the past.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	○
c) Over the past 10 years, my level of helping or providing assistance to my neighbours has decreased.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	○

D14) Look at the following list of organizations. Check off all those **you are a <u>member</u> of** and then check off **how <u>active</u>** you are in the organization.

	Are You a **<u>Member</u>** of: NO	YES		How **<u>Active</u>** are you in this Organization? Don't get involved	Attend some meetings	Volunteer my time	Have been an elected officer
a) community organization *(museum society, chamber of commerce, local development, etc)*	❍	❍	If yes ➔				
b) club or special interest group *(hobby or sports club, etc)*	❍	❍	If yes ➔				
c) service or fraternal organization *(Elks, Legion, Kiwanis, Rotary, 4H, etc)*	❍	❍	If yes ➔				
d) charitable organizations *(Red Cross, etc)*	❍	❍	If yes ➔				
e) church	❍	❍	If yes ➔				
f) other (specify) _____	❍	❍	If yes ➔				

D15) How often do you **<u>vote</u>** in the following kinds of elections?

(Place an X on each line)	Never	Seldom	Usually	Always
a) municipal or local elections				
b) provincial elections				
c) federal elections				

D16) How much do you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements?

(Put an X in one box on each line).	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
a) If I want my own interests to be represented I must vote and take an interest in political affairs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
b) Different local government agencies (such as municipal council or local planning authority) are supportive of the needs of residents in this community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
c) I try to keep in touch with individuals and organizations I think have the power to influence what goes on in my community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
d) If the quality of our community was ever threatened, there are numerous organizations or agencies people in this community could rely on to support our cause.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
e) If residents in this community were to become too critical of local government officials, the community would likely suffer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍
f) People in this community effectively access outside resources for the benefit of the local community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	❍

SECTION E
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

E1) What is your sex? ❍ Male ❍ Female

E2) How many people live in your household? ____

How many of these are:

Under 18 years old ____

Adults 18 or older ____

E3) What is your age?

❍ under 18	❍ 24-29	❍ 40-44	❍ 55-59	❍ 70-74
❍ 18-19	❍ 30-34	❍ 45-49	❍ 60-64	❍ 75-79
❍ 20-24	❍ 35-39	❍ 50-54	❍ 65-69	❍ 80-84
				❍ 85 or over

E4) What is your **marital status**?

- ❍ single (never married)
- ❍ married
- ❍ common-law
- ❍ divorced / separated
- ❍ widowed

E5) What is the highest level of education you have completed?
(Put an X in one space only)

- ❍ grade 8 or less
- ❍ some secondary (high) school
- ❍ high school diploma
- ❍ post-secondary (non-university)
- ❍ some university but no degree
- ❍ one or more university degrees

E6) Which of the following categories describes your **current employment** status?
(Place an X in the one space which best describes your situation)

- ❍ employed outside the home, full-time
- ❍ employed outside the home, part-time
- ❍ self-employed, full-time
- ❍ self-employed, part-time
- ❍ home-maker
- ❍ retired
- ❍ semi-retired
- ❍ student
- ❍ unemployed

E7) Are you affiliated with a religious organization? ❍ NO ❍ YES

E8) Which of the following categories best describes your **last year's gross household income?**
(Place an X in one space only)

❍ under $20,000	❍ $60,000 - $79,999
❍ $20,000 - $39,999	❍ $80,000 - $99,999
❍ $40,000 - $59,999	❍ $100,000 or more

SECTION F
COMMENTS

F1) If you have any additional comments you would like to make, please note them here.

F2) If you would like to participate further in this study, and are interested in discussing these issues further, please include your name, phone number and/ or email address. (Some respondents will be contacted to participate in a one hour interview.)

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.