The Changing Landscape of Agriculture: A Case Study of Community Change

by

Bonnie Reid
Bachelor of Social Work, University of Calgary, 2004

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Abstract

The objective of my research will be to gain an understanding of the changes in agriculture and the resulting impact on a rural Saskatchewan community, as well as garnering an appreciation of the community’s reaction and experiences of resistance and resiliency. Through a case study of community change, implications to the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of this community will be explored as Canada’s agricultural legacy—its traditional practices and a unique way of life—sits precariously in an increasingly corporatized agricultural landscape. Globalized agri-business and huge conglomerations have moved onto the prairie landscape and left in their wake what is being deemed a farm crisis comparable to that of the Great Depression of the 1930s (Qualman, 2001). While the Canadian prairies continue to stand as a leading producer of the world’s food, it appears to be increasingly difficult for these small family farmers to rub shoulders with agri-business and continue to play a role in food production and sustainability (National Farmers Union, 2005). This research aims to explore the means in which farm families been impacted by these immense changes to farming, and thus in their lifestyles, and how they have managed and coped with these changes. The sharing of local stories through a community case study offers an opportunity for relationship building, learning, and mutual reflexivity that can translate into an understanding of the future function, and functioning of the small family farm and rural towns.
Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. iii
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................ iv
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................... vi
Dedication ........................................................................................................................ vii
Chapter One: The Planting of the Seed, the Research Story ........................................... 1
Chapter Two: Literature Review ....................................................................................... 7
   Introduction ................................................................................................................... 7
      Historical Framework: Policies and Programs ......................................................... 7
      Grain Transportation Policy: The Crow’s Nest Pass Act ........................................ 8
      Grain Transportation: The Impacts ........................................................................ 11
      Grain Marketing Policy—the Canadian Wheat Board ......................................... 15
      Grain Marketing Policy: The Impacts ................................................................. 21
      Agricultural Trade Policy—the Way Ahead and the Food Strategy ................... 23
      International Trade Policy—GATT and NAFTA ............................................... 25
   Impacts of Government Policies ................................................................................ 26
   Mental Health Impacts ............................................................................................... 30
   Contributing Factors of Psychological Stress .......................................................... 31
      Farm Men and Stress ............................................................................................ 32
      Farm Women and Stress ....................................................................................... 33
   Access and Availability of Resources ........................................................................ 34
   Gaps and Limitations of Literature .......................................................................... 36
   Summary of Literature Review .................................................................................. 37
Chapter Three: Methodology .......................................................................................... 40
   Introduction ................................................................................................................ 40
      Aim of this Research ............................................................................................. 40
      Theoretical Framework .......................................................................................... 41
      Methodology: The Case Study ................................................................................ 42
      Research Site ......................................................................................................... 46
      Ethical Considerations ............................................................................................ 47
      Recruitment Methods .............................................................................................. 51
      Data Collection Methods ...................................................................................... 53
      Data Collection ....................................................................................................... 56
      Data Analysis .......................................................................................................... 60
      Strengths and Limitations of the Research Process ............................................... 65
Chapter Four: Data Analysis ............................................................................................ 67
   Introduction ................................................................................................................ 67
      The First Story: Community Perspective ............................................................... 68
      Theme: Economic Costs ......................................................................................... 73
      Sub-theme: Operating inputs and outputs ............................................................. 73
      Sub-theme: Technology and equipment ............................................................... 76
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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this project to my incredible children Kristopher, Robin and Chad and to my wonderful grandchildren Nathaniel and Nikolas. To my children, without your enduring faith in me, your encouragement, understanding and support of each and every endeavour that I’ve undertaken, I could not have made the journeys. You have given me roots when I have drifted, the freedom to explore when I needed answers, the courage to delve into the unknown, and unconditional love throughout my trials and triumphs. I thank you; you are my anchor and my strength.

Nathaniel and Nikolas, through your eyes I have seen the wonder of curiosity, the excitement of exploring and the joy of learning. I appreciate the opportunities to build snow forts and pirate ships, railways and farmyards, cure stuffed toys of their ailments, and paint and draw with random. It is your wonderful world of imagination and creativity that has inspired me in my continued studies and given me the hope that we can all achieve our dreams. As aspiring farmers, explorers, and leaders, stay curious, ask questions and share your thoughts and dreams.
Chapter One: The Planting of the Seed, the Research Story

During course work for my Master of Social Work Degree, a seed was planted that caused me to ponder the notion of food, how it is produced, and the fate of those who produce it. In an assigned article entitled, *Food Security as a Social Movement in Neo-liberal Times: Envisioning a Role for Social Sciences*, by Vanmala Hiranandani (2008), the author speaks about the right to food and the right to produce food through sustainable and responsible means. She describes how the re-structuring of traditional farming practices in developing countries has taken place in the wake of neo-liberal ideology. Neoliberalism, according to Brown (2003), “is equated with a radically free market: maximized competition and free trade achieved through economic deregulation, elimination of tariffs, and a range of monetary and social policies favourable to business and indifferent toward poverty, social deracination, cultural decimation, long-term resource depletion, and environmental destruction” (p. 38). Within this framework, Hiranandani describes the new face of agriculture and its impacts on farmers.

While the middle and elite classes reap the benefits of global agriculture, Hiranandani states that the small family farmers and agricultural workers in developing countries are realizing a much different outcome in increased poverty, urban migration, unemployment, and compromised health, education, and housing. Hiranandani goes on to state that, in light of neo-liberal ideals and policies based on the rules of international trade, small scale sustainable farming has been pushed aside to make way for large scale corporate enterprises. The result has been higher production costs, lower incomes, reduced financial backing, diminished support for domestic food production, and enforced dependence on corporate patented seed. These factors are not unlike what I have observed in my prairie travels and the
concerns that I hear expressed by family and friends who are struggling with the changes in the agricultural sector in Canada. A drive through the prairie provinces bears witness to deserted farmyards, broken down and boarded up towns. The extent of the corporate hold is seen, with inland grain terminals, monstrous equipment, and endless kilometres of land stretching yellow in a death pallor as a result of chemicals used extensively in industrial farming.

Based on my experiences and those of family members, I wondered if the fate of agricultural producers in Canada parallels that of producers in developing countries. Canada is governed by proponents of neo-liberal ideology. It is a country rich in resources and vibrant in its status as a developed country, and a major player in the global marketplace. I question, however, the role that this governance has in the changes so evident in the agricultural landscape of the Canadian prairies and in the concerns voiced by agricultural producers. I am concerned that corporate agriculture is wreaking havoc on small scale farmers in this country and impacting Canadians’ right to food and the right to produce food through sustainable and responsible means.

Hiranandani refers to the declining social, cultural, ecological, and economic fabric of agricultural communities as “deliberate projects of genocidal exploitation that drain resources and traditional knowledge of the poor of developing countries into corporate-dominated global markets, robbing people of their livelihoods and support systems” (2008, p. 44). This gives rise to concern regarding the impacts that corporate agriculture has on the structure of prairie communities. In the wake of these impacts, I questioned how communities were coping with the changes and if prairie food producers were being robbed of their livelihoods and support systems. I pondered what characteristics these communities had that would assist
them in their reaction, resistance, and resiliency in light of corporate agriculture. The seed was growing and my research question began to take shape.

My interest in the changes in prairie food production, the impact of corporate agriculture on small rural communities, and the characteristics of these communities that serve as a guide in maneuvering these changes is also influenced by personal motive. As the mother of a son who is now living the experience of corporatized agriculture and the challenges it creates in his community, this research project was also undertaken as a means to gain insight into the fate that may be awaiting him. I carried with me into this research the hope that this work and lifestyle, amidst the many changes, can continue to provide a productive and rewarding way of life. I have hope, yet I worry that the challenges of corporate agriculture will result in the grievous loss of livelihood and lifestyle as my son and his peers struggle to survive in a world where the family farm is placed on the auction block for the sake of neo-liberal market-focused practices and corporatized agri-business. With family farming becoming a way of the past, and communities faltering under corporate pressure, the social connections, the belonging and acceptance, the trust and security, and the intergenerational cooperation that they offer may be wilting away as well, leaving neighbours strangers and their communities a dusty remembrance.

This research looks at the changes and asks of the impacts of corporate agriculture and how my son and other small farm producers will reconcile this new way of doing business. I ask if reconciliation will even be the issue if they, too, falter and become a statistic of urban migration. If the devices of fate allow people to continue to farm, the question also remains: How will they manoeuvre through the political hotbed, the
environmental destruction, the unfamiliar landscape, the ethical traumas, and the economic adversity?

   Literature suggests that much has been written regarding corporate agri-business and the farm crisis. There appears to be a gap, however, in studying the impact on rural communities and the ways and means that they are managing this impact. My objective in this research is to gain an understanding of a small piece of this puzzle, to celebrate the resiliency and resistance of a small rural community, and advocate for measures to interrupt the potential loss of community. Qualman (2001) worries over the state of small sustainable farming and rural communities at the hands of corporatized agri-business and stresses that the Canadian government must re-visit market-based agricultural policies or it “will preside over the end of the family farm, the depopulation of rural Canada and the betrayal of generations of Canadians who worked the land and built the nation” (p. 29). In building relationships, in gaining and sharing knowledge, and rural communities standing together in battling the corporate behemoth, perhaps betrayal can be averted.

   I take on this research project in a dual role—that of an insider and, in contrast, from the position of an outsider, the researcher. As an insider, I lived this relationship of work and lifestyle for a number of years in the role of a wife of a farmer and a partner in farm work. During this time I had a brief taste of some of the changes that were to take a powerful hold on the farmer, the family farm, and their small rural communities. I lived the experience of volatile markets, government regulations, high costs of production, the devastation of drought and hail, hard physical labour, and long working hours. I enjoyed lush economic times, cooperative weather, full grain bins and fat cattle, and the lasting lessons that hard labour, working together, and mutual sharing offered. I faced conflict with extended family
as an intruder coming into their community, of farming practices that clashed with my values, and personal time that did not belong to any one of us. I experienced a failed marriage and an irreparable relationship, but also enduring friendships and a love of the Land of Living Skies.

These life lessons I have taken into my work as a social worker and as a researcher in this project. These lessons provide me with a frame of reference as I attempt to stand against social injustice and environmental spoil, to brave political and economic instability, to recognise and honour cultural differences, address ethical dilemmas, and to reconcile spatial boundaries in my ongoing quest for knowledge, understanding, mutual acceptance, and respect in working relationships. My goal was to give to my research these lessons that I have learned, to greet the differences that I would encounter, and be open to the gifts it presented through developing new relationships.

I also come to this research as an outsider. I am not a member of the community that is the focus of this study and I was unknown to anyone in the community prior to this research. I am an outsider within the realm of farming, being now a seasoned urban dweller and geographically removed from the prairie landscape and farming community. Yet, in this community of study and the land upon which it resides, I have an unaltering connection. This community became home to my paternal grandparents during the years of settlement and promise in the early 1900s. It is the birth community of my father. The drought and winds of the 1920s and 1930s drove almost all life from this prairie, and the Great Depression tried to take the rest. But my family stayed on to eke out a living until the last rain drop, the last penny forced them into an exodus to the central ranges of the province where farming was less hostile and nature more lenient. The winds left standing, however,
some of the physical ghosts of my family’s struggles and certainly the soul of this land in the souls of my family. It is in mine. It is in my heart and, as Saskatchewan poet Lorna Crozier (2009) voices in her memoir, Small Beneath the Sky, “This ache, this country of wind and dust and sky, is your starting point, the way you understand yourself, the place you return to when there’s nowhere else to go. It is the pared-down language of your blood and bones” (p. 94). It is in my bones.

In these dual roles, I took with me into this community the hope that I would find myself, as a researcher, in the position of an ally. Firstly, I came into this research having walked for a short time as a farmer; an ‘insider.’ Secondly, I have a strong bond to the land and this community. As Ball and Janyst (2008) stress, the “primacy of relationships as a foundation for research” (p. 33), my goal was to approach this research with insider information, outsider curiosity, and an open mind by developing relationships and collaborative partnerships with community members. Through this alliance, we would seek to answer the questions regarding the changes and impacts of corporate agriculture on a small, rural prairie community and how the characteristics of the community—the means by which members organize, manage their affairs, maintain their traditions, respect and support one another, and grow as a people and a community—provide for their reaction, resistance, and resilience.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Farming has become a competitive business enterprise and the producers that make up this business have the honourable task of providing food for the domestic and world marketplaces. It is a profession that requires a commitment of hard work amidst numerous changes and challenges. This chapter will provide the historical context of several significant government policies and programs that have laid the groundwork for agriculture in Canada today. Three specific areas will be noted: grain transportation, grain marketing, and trade policies. Events arising from these policies and programs have led to the re-shaping of agriculture and a whole new way of ‘doing business.’ These events encompass changes to the political, social, economic, and cultural landscape of agriculture. Also explored in the literature are ways in which these changes impact the mental wellness of communities.

Historical Framework: Policies and Programs

With the enactment of Dominion Land Act of 1872, Canada invited settlement to the western prairies with the offer of 160 acres of homestead land. With residency, cultivation, and production of the land within a period of time, homesteaders would earn a clear title (Saskatchewan Archives Board, 2011). The result was a swell of immigrants to the prairies in what McManus (2011) refers to as “the last great land rush of modern times” for a homestead in what Canada promoted as “The Last Best West” (p. 7). What followed was not a tidy chronological order of events, but an intricate web of interconnected and interdependent policy and practices that would shape and re-shape the agricultural landscape of the prairies.
Grain Transportation Policy: The Crow’s Nest Pass Act

The Canadian government had its eye on nation building which included settlement and agricultural production in the prairie provinces as well as the acquisition and development of resource rich areas of British Columbia. With the added threat of American interest in British Columbia and fear of their northern expansion into this area, the Canadian government enticed the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) to extend its rail line through the Crow’s Nest Pass of the Rocky Mountains between Alberta and British Columbia. The government was then ensured of a strong presence in the west with immigrant settlement, a market for eastern Canadian manufacturers, and a foothold in resource development (Broadway, 2006; Earl, 2011; Swanson & Venema, 2006). The CPR was compensated with a hefty monetary subsidy, as well as tracts of land along the rail line and duty and tax exemptions for the rail line construction. While the compensations to the CPR were found by many to be overly generous, Earl states “the consequences of failure of the joint enterprise of building a commercially sound railway with a politically sound nation were immense” (p. 14).

In exchange for this purse, the CPR agreed to reduce freight rates to prairie farmers for shipping their grain to eastern ports. This resulted in the Crow’s Nest Pass Act of 1897 and the agreement known as the Crow Rate,; a rate that was to be maintained “in perpetuity” (Swanson & Venema, 2006, p. 102). Earl (2011) states that “[T]he objective of the Crow Rate was to protect the western farmer and the grain industry from the market power of the railways” (p. 32). Broadway (2006) indicates that the Crow Rate was, in fact, a means to “promote political and economic integration” (p. 125). The political—the need for coast to coast expansion and settlement in the name of nationhood—melded with the economic in
providing western grain producers an affordable means to ship their products to domestic and export markets.

The Crow Rate proved satisfactory for producers, but was not without contention on the part of the railways who felt this was a losing proposition. Rates continued to be a broiling issue and prompted two royal commissions. The Turgeon Commission in the 1950s supported the Crow Rate, referring to it as the backbone of national transportation policy and stating that any disruption “would mean that Parliament no longer looks upon the Western Canada’s production of grain [as] requiring special consideration in the national interest” (Earl, 2011, p. 20). In contrast, the MacPherson Commission in the 1960s focused on the increasing freight costs and the railway’s protestations that they were losing money to the tune of millions of dollars as a result of the Crow Rate. As a result, the *National Transportation Act* of 1967 included the MacPherson Commission’s recommendations that “an economic, efficient and adequate transportation system would most likely develop when regulation does not impede competition” (p. 20). It called for a review of costs to the railways and suggested the notion of transportation subsidies. This recommendation came under fire by western proponents of the Crow Rate who stated that the government was favouring the railways and allowing them to renege on the Crow Rate agreement. Thus, legislation intended to subsidize the transportation of grain was defeated. This movement in political ideology that involved the market in determining the price and transportation of grain, however, would be a major factor in the Crow Rate’s collapse and the significant repercussions in the agricultural sector.

The matter of freight rates did not rest and resulted in further inquiries, each to be met with intense opposition to any change to the Crow Rate. The federal government’s bottom
line, however, was the tipping point. With mounting costs to maintain rail transport and swelling railway deficits, the federal government, under Pierre Trudeau, accepted the recommendations of the Gilson Report in 1982. This proposed a shared cost structure between the federal government and farmers for grain transportation. This saw the Crow Rate, a mainstay for farmers in the transportation of grain to market for almost one hundred years, evolve into the *Western Grain Transportation Act* (WGTA) in 1984. Under the WGTA, rates were set annually, contingent on shipping costs as well as the forecasts of grain production. It was a means to compensate railways for any losses and to ensure that grain producers paid their fair share for services (Broadway, 2006; Earl, 2011; Swanson & Venema, 2006).

The WGTA, however, was not without criticism and pressure by opposition groups, including the Canadian livestock industry, grain processors, and the Alberta Conservative government regarding what they deemed an unfair subsidy that drove up the cost of grain (Swanson & Venema, 2006). It was also seen as a deterrent in the modernization of grain transportation and the efficiency of the farm sector (Broadway, 2006; Earl, 2011). The Alberta government asserted that the farm economy would not develop “until farmers face the impact of paying full transportation costs” and made “more efficient use of their resources” (Alberta Agriculture, 1990, as cited in Broadway, 2006, p. 126). This efficiency, seen as a means for economic development and stability, included diversification of crops, the use of surplus grains for livestock production, and the removal of marginal land from cultivation.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) also played a role in ushering out grain transportation subsidies. The federal government, frowned upon by domestic
opponents and chastised by the world marketplace for providing what was determined as an unfair subsidy, responded by reducing tariffs. It was, however, left with a financial responsibility under the WGTA which was not, according to Swanson and Venema (2006), consistent with the government ideology of the day that extolled a market-based economy, and individual responsibility. The WGTA was not economically efficient within the market system. Thus, this inefficiency, coupled with a large federal deficit, saw the WGTA, still relatively in its infancy, meet its demise with enactment of the Budget Implementation Act in 1995 (Broadway, 2006). This resulted in freight rates more than doubling for prairie grain farmers. Even with payouts from the government as a means to offset alternate transportation costs, farmers were left staggering under the load of increased costs and the full financial responsibility of seeing their product to market (Broadway, 2006; Earl, 2011; Swanson & Venema, 2006).

**Grain Transportation: The Impacts**

The Crow Rate is said to have impeded the efficiency of grain transportation for almost 30 years, and its successor, the WGTA, was “doomed from the outset” due to “the shift in public philosophy that saw markets, not centralized control as the appropriate way to run an economy” (Earl, 1996, cited in Swanson & Venema, 2006, p. 112). Swanson and Venema indicate that the “Crow Rate’s persistence well into the 20th century was [a] serious under-investment in grain handling and rail transportation infrastructure” due to its rigidity and lack of adaptability in response to changing market conditions (p. 99). Not only do they feel that the Crow Rate caused the “stifling of innovation in railway transportation…which hindered the market from providing the signals to allow actors to self-organize appropriately,” Swanson and Venema indicate that “such an administered rate in a free
market system did not make economic sense” (p. 109). They add that “the ability of the free
market to adjust to numerous circumstances in all corners of the market is a positive trait
with respect to adaptability” (p. 109). This adaptability was confined by Crow Rate policy.

In the post-Crow Rate and WGTA period, the world market did a tailspin and the
purported self-organizational practices left farmers having to adapt to decreases in grain
prices and staggering increases in input costs—the costs to plant, grow, and harvest a crop.
Saskatchewan, in particular, saw farm incomes drop a substantial “87 percent relative to the
average baseline during 1994–98” (Swanson & Venema, 2006, p. 111). In light of this
downward spiral, Swanson and Venema re-visit their assumption that farmers would be
successful after the removal of the safety net provided by the Crow Rate, due to self-
organization and adaptation practices purported by the market system. They question if “the
‘adaptive capacity’ of prairie farmers to cope with market vagary was greatly over-estimated
in the zeal to embrace market principles” (p. 12). This unanswered question leads them to
suggest that further research is necessary to understand the means of adjustment and
adaptation needed by farmers within a market-focused environment. Earl (1996, cited in
Swanson & Venema, 2006), in reflecting upon historical events of the 1920s, indicates
“powerful interest groups: manufacturers, the railways and banks” were attempting to
manipulate the market at the expense of farmers and that the market was deemed at that time
by farmers “not as a malfunctioning institution that could be corrected, but as fundamentally
corrupt” (p. 103). Commenting upon the current tumultuous marketplace and its impact on
prairie farmers, Earl states, “Perhaps, (future policy makers) will point out just how foolish
we were to place such faith in the market, and to forget the abuse of market power which
lead farmers to be so interventionist in the first place” (Earl, 1996, cited in Swanson & Venema, 2006, p. 112, parenthesis in original).

In response to the end of the Crow Rate and the WGTA, the National Farmers Union (NFU), in 2005, presented a plan to the Parliamentary Secretary of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada that, in their estimation, would help address the situation of farmers (Swanson & Venema, 2006). The plan, entitled Solving the Farm Crisis: A Sixteen Point Plan for Canadian Farm and Food Security, outlined strategies to help resolve growing farm expenditures and debt, keep farmers on the farm, and attend to the disappearance of farm communities (National Farmers Union, 2005). The National Farmers Union requested that the government re-visit the transportation of grain, stating that “Perhaps no other policy decision has had a greater negative impact on western farmers’ income than the ending of the Crow benefit and the legislative changes made to transportation” (p. 7). The NFU calls the situation in the agricultural sector a crisis as farmers are now shouldering the costs of transportation at a loss of as much as 40 percent of their income. The federal government states that the NFU “has been excessively concerned about railway profitability, and has allowed CN and CP to shift costs onto the farmers who cannot afford it” (p. 8), effectively legislating farmers into financial straits.

Along with the soaring costs of transporting grain by rail, the closure of railway branch lines and prairie elevators resulted in a greater need for on-farm storage for grain and larger trucks to transport it longer distances to market (Swanson & Venema, 2006). The authors state that the costs for infrastructure, together with increases in municipal taxes to maintain rural country roads due to increased traffic, have caused farmers to dig even deeper
into their pockets. Thus, with the end of affordable grain shipping through the Crow Rate, farmers experienced a triple financial blow for storage, transportation, and taxes.

Broadway (2006) states that predicted outcomes in the wake of the defunct Crow Rate suggested a decrease in grain production and an increase in diversification, including specialty crops and livestock and forage production. He applauds the dissolution of the Crow Rate in transforming the prairies from a “grain dependent export economy to a livestock-processed meat export economy” (p. 122). He states that diversification, touted by the Alberta government as a more efficient use of farm resources, has led to a lively pork production industry in Saskatchewan and its sister province of Manitoba, as well as a healthy means to juggle surplus grain and increased grain shipping costs.

In sum, the Crow Rate supported grain producers in transporting grain to domestic and export markets, and its successor, the Western Grain Transportation Act, although a step removed, buttressed some of the costs for transport. The Crow Rate, once highly cherished and dubbed by the late Prime Minister John Diefenbaker as the ‘Magna Carta of western farmers,’ was instrumental in protecting farmers from market power (Orchard, 2000). It has now been chastised as an unfair subsidy, an impediment to market competition, and the root of the stagnation of the railway system and the efficacy of grain handling (Earl, 2011; Swanson & Venema, 2006). Within the parameters of Canada’s trade agreements and agricultural policies, stewed in the ideology of trade liberalization, the Crow Rate has been abolished to make way for producer responsibility and self-adaptability in order to make better use of their resources.
Grain Marketing Policy—The Canadian Wheat Board

The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) had its roots planted solidly in agriculture since its establishment in 1935 as the sole marketing board of prairie wheat and barley (Magnan, 2011; Salgo & Gauthier, 2012; Western Development Museum, 2003). The CWB’s mission was to attain a maximum price for these grains in the marketplace and return all profits back to the farmer (Magnan, 2011; Salgo & Gauthier, 2011). As a collective or orderly marketing agency, the CWB held to three concepts: single desk marketing, grain pooling, and government guarantees (Magnan). The single desk monopoly addressed competition between farmers and allowed for increased economic power in grain marketing, while pooling allowed for the management of supply to demand, and government guarantees provided farmers a consistent price. These three tenets afforded farmers an advantage in a fluctuating and unpredictable global market with, as Magnan states, “basic safety net” (p. 4). This collective body was instrumental in negotiating premium prices for prairie grain and, in tandem with the Canadian Grain Commission, the arm responsible for regulating quality, has afforded Canada the lofty reputation as a provider of high quality grain within the global market.

The CWB was born of the Grain Growers’ Grain Company (GGGC), a cooperative established in 1905 by producers who felt they were at the mercy of railways for shipping, as well as elevator companies and the Winnipeg Grain Exchange for the grading and pricing of their grain (University of Saskatchewan Archives, 2003). The GGGC, along with the Canadian Grain Commission, came about as the result of lobbying by farmers’ groups as they set out to ensure protection for their product. These farmers’ movements played a pivotal role in the political and economic landscape of Canada, in their quest for “market
power and self-determination” and considered “orderly marketing, the principle of coordinated collective marketing, as a key component of their struggle” (Magnan, 2011, p. 7).

The Canadian government, over the years, has stepped in and bowed out of the grain marketing venture, playing to the pressures of world events and to the collective voices of farmers. During World War One, they became directly involved in grain marketing by establishing the Board of Grain Supervisors (BGS) to manage domestic and export markets (Western Development Museum, 2003). The Canadian Wheat Board’s two payment system evolved from this interim measure: initial payment for product upon delivery, and the final payment at the end of the crop year with the final tally of grain sales. The floor price was also established, ensuring farmers were paid a base amount for their product, and any deficits, based on market prices, were assumed by the federal government (Western Development Museum). In 1920, the government’s move to abolish the Board of Grain Supervisors and put grain marketing back into the hands of the private sector was met with great opposition from grain producers who supported the orderly marketing system. In a show of resistance, farmers established Wheat Pools in each of the three prairie provinces and initiated a Central Selling Agency based on the premise of the BGS (Western Development Museum, 2003; Magnan, 2011). Magnan refers to this movement of and organization by farmers to ensure pooling and collective marketing as “economic cooperation” (p. 9). The federal government intervened again with loan guarantees and initial grain payments in 1929 when the world grain prices bottomed out and the Wheat Pools were in dire financial straits. With the turbulent years of the Great Depression looming, the government’s involvement was not to
be relinquished and the *Canadian Wheat Board Act* was passed in July 1935 (Magnan, 2011; Salgo & Gauthier, 2012; Western Development Museum, 2003).

The Canadian Wheat Board was initially a voluntary body; however, during World War II, it was compulsory to market all grains, oilseeds, and corn through the CWB under the *War Measures Act* (Magnan, 2011; Salgo & Gauthier, 2012). In the post war years, Salgo and Gauthier state that, as a means to stabilize world grain prices, the Canadian government saw fit to continue with the CWB’s single desk monopoly. Magnan indicates that, during this period, the “CWB became the centrepiece of Canada’s agricultural policy” (p. 10). The CWB had proved its usefulness and this orderly marketing entity was established as a Crown Corporation with the enactment of the *Canadian Wheat Board Act* in 1965 (Salgo & Gauthier, 2012; Western Development Museum, 2003).

The CWB began a struggle to maintain its market power when the 1970s ushered in what Magnan (2011) refers to as “the end of international cooperation on wheat prices” (p. 11) with the United States and the European Union playing greater roles in the grain export market. In conjunction with new agricultural policies regarding diversification in livestock and specialty crops that were beyond the parameters of its marketing desk, the CWB was displaced as central to domestic agriculture in Canada (Magnan). This was followed by lush times with grain prices dramatically increasing with expanded export markets, and the government providing incentives that encouraged farmers to expand their land base in order to meet the demands of the market (Broadway, 2006; Magnan, 2011). This time of prosperity increased the market power of the agricultural corporations, playing to the demand for farm inputs to satisfy expansion, leaving the CWB on even shakier ground.
This era of prosperity ended in the 1980s with crashing grain prices and soaring interest rates and farm input costs. With the CWB’s market power diminishing and the influence of large agricultural corporations escalating, farmers found themselves in what Mitchell (1975) refers to as a “cost-price squeeze” (cited in Magnan, 2011, p. 12) as they attempted to reconcile decreased grain prices with mounting input costs. Smaller farmers who could not compete in this new expansionary vision were faced with exorbitant debt and forced out of business and out of communities in what Troughton (1989, cited in Magnan, 2011) has dubbed “rationalization” (p. 13). Those who were able to ride out the financial storm and could afford to consolidate did so and farms more than doubled in size, diminishing the number of farms by almost half (Broadway, 2006). According to the Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics as cited in Broadway, the population of rural municipalities dropped by 19 percent in the years from 1986 to 2001, resulting in a loss of over 16,000 farms in Saskatchewan (Broadway). The loss of farms resulted in a shrivelling of communities, and as Broadway states, “Many towns and villages found on maps in all practically exist in name only” as their residents packed up in the wake of these harsh economic times (p. 127). Magnan (2011) states that the impacts of the price crash “eroded the political effectiveness and solidarity of family farms” and some “abandoned co-operation for free-market principles” (p. 13). As a result, a mounting “social, economic, and ideological” tension grew between farmers (p. 12). This ideological clash wreaked havoc with collective marketing and the CWB found itself in the middle of a battle between proponents of cooperative and orderly marketing and those championing the more individualistic open marketing system.
As noted above, the prairie Wheat Pools, established by farmers’ cooperatives as a means to salvage collective marketing, turned their backs on the CWB, playing a significant role in its downfall (Magnan, 2011). In order to address their capital shortfalls, the three Wheat Pools offered up shares to the public and made their debut as the private agricultural business conglomerate, Viterra, in 2007. Magnan indicates that Viterra answers to shareholders, not farmers, and the collective nature of wheat pools no longer holds a noteworthy presence on the prairies. Viterra has since been acquired by Glencore International, a commodity trading and mining multinational company headquartered in Switzerland (GlencoreXstrata, 2013). This unfolding saw the CWB become an even more precarious entity and was, as Magnan indicates, “considered by many to be the last chance to achieve meaningful producer presence in the supply chain” of grain marketing (p. 16).

Although a majority of farmers and farm organizations were supportive of the CWB, in recent years it has been suggested that it was more of a monopsony in its role as the single buyer of wheat and barley (MTL Economist, 2012). Magnan (2011) speaks of a tension between the proponents of the CWB and the champions of neo-liberal ideology espousing “market efficiency, freedom of enterprise and free trade” (p. 5) that further ignited opposition to the single desk marketer. Opponents, including domestic and foreign commodity buyers, transnational grain companies, and right wing political movements, including the Alberta and United States governments, believed the “CWB’s monopoly mandate as an illegitimate infringement of rights of farmers to market their grain independently” (p. 5). The United States was particularly aggressive, challenging trade agreements and imposing tariffs on Canadian wheat. Thus, consistent with their economic reform and market-focused ideology, in December 1998, the federal government tapered back its support of the Canadian Wheat
Board (Magnan, 2011; Western Development Museum, 2003). The government remained on the periphery, leaving the CWB under the direction of a board comprised of farmer-elected and federally-appointed directors, with financial support resting in the hands of the Minister of Finance (Salgo & Gauthier, 2012).

In 2006, the federal government’s announcement of its intention to disband the CWB resulted in conflict between the government and the CWB Board of Directors, with an outcry from proponents. The government stretched the parameters of their “power to direct,” (Magnan, 2011, p. 19), intended in the CWB Act to provide government with only “residual oversight over the CWB,” to carry through with its agenda (p. 15). An Order-in-Council directed the CWB not to “expend funds, directly or indirectly, on advocating the retention of its monopoly powers” (Government of Canada, 2006, as cited in Magnan, 2011, p. 20). This action, deemed a ‘gag order,’ was overturned by the Federal Court of Canada in June 2008, with its ruling that the government had acted improperly in its attempts to silence the CWB (Magnan, 2011). The Federal Court of Appeal, however, reversed this decision and the Conservative government continued on its path to eliminate the CWB by appointing pro-market board members and changing the voters list of farmer members. Thus, at the time of the October 2006 election, the number of eligible voters was decreased by 1600 members. The government similarly dismissed the CWB President and CEO, Adrian Measner, when he challenged the government regarding their use of the above measures.

The federal government solidified its plan for the CWB with the introduction of Bill C-18, the Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers Act (Salgo & Gauthier, 2012). It received Royal assent in December 2011, ending the reign of the historic Canadian Wheat Board and paving the way for open marketing. The Canadian Wheat Board Interim Operations Act
came into effect in August 2012. Within the maximum five year period of the legislation, the Canadian Wheat Board must either position itself as a private corporation or dissolve, thus seeing the final departure of this marketing entity (Salgo & Gauthier, 2012).

The passing of Bill C-18 was not without fury and controversy. Parliament has been challenged in its disregard for legislated requirements noted in the Canadian Wheat Board Act of 1998 (Parliament of Canada, 2008). Irrespective of the legislated requirement for a producer vote before the Minister can introduce change and the Federal Court ruling of Federal Justice Campbell in December 2011, the Conservative government passed Bill C-18 (Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board, 2013). The Federal Court ruling indicates that Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz acted in breach in regard to the CWBA Section 47.1, by not consulting the Canadian Wheat Board and holding a producer vote prior to introducing Bill C-18. The Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board, a proponent organization of the CWB, have initiated a lawsuit to restore the Wheat Board or provide $17 million in damages to farmers for their investment in CWB infrastructure (Canadian Wheat Board Alliance, 2013; Magnan, 2011).

**Grain Marketing Policy: The Impacts**

As the Canadian Wheat Board operates under the *Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers Act*, farmers have the option of collective marketing or open marketing in the sale of their products potentially until 2017, the five year maximum period of operation indicated under this legislation. This period of time will provide a glimpse into the long-term impacts of the abolishment of this iconic Canadian institution. While the CWB was responsible for the marketing of wheat and barley for export and for domestic human consumption in Canada, producers of diverse grain, pulse, and oilseed crops have been marketing their grains
independently within the global market without the orderly marketing of the CWB. Orderly marketing may well meld with this arm of independent marketing by farmers; however, the impacts noted include a loss of voice and market power within the global marketplace, and a guarantee of profits placed in the hands of farmers through CWB policy.

The National Farmers Union, in 2005, introduced their *Sixteen Point Plan for Canadian Farm and Food Security*. They indicate that the Canadian Wheat Board has been instrumental in controlling marketing costs in the sale of Canadian grains, and as a non-profit entity, returned all profits, less administrative costs, to farmers. With the termination of this orderly marketing organization, the NFU states that “higher grain prices will mean a windfall of billions of dollars for the world’s dominant commodity-trading transnationals such as Cargill” (p. 6).

Magnan (2011) saw hope with the amendments to the *CWB Act* in 1998 that provided a “more politicized role as farmer advocate” (p. 17), which gave farmers a direct voice with the peer-elected Board of Directors. This appeared to mitigate the discontent of farmers about the monopoly in wheat and barley sales. Regarding the legislation that specified producer votes regarding any changes to the Act, Magnan states that “conflicts over collective marketing have partially been reframed as questions of self-determination and accountability” (p. 17). None of these changes, however, survived the current government’s mandate. The collective has become the competitive. The end of the CWB has resulted in a loss of market protection and a voice for farmers within the global market.

An appeal by the Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board to restore the board continues to wage before the Courts. The Federal Court did rule against the government in their manipulation of the *Canadian Wheat Board Act* in their attempts to silence the CWB and
ignore Justice Campbell’s ruling in regards to a producer vote. Although the initial ruling was overturned by the Federal Court of Appeal, a collective movement continues its challenge of the actions of our federal government. This collective resistance echoes historical farmers’ movements that resulted in collective marketing and pools which displayed “economic cooperation,” and were a source of “social empowerment of prairie farmers” (Magnan, 2011, p. 9). Magnan offers hope; however, he questions if economic cooperation can continue within the neo-liberal ideology of “market efficiency, freedom of enterprise and free trade” (p. 5).

**Agricultural Trade Policy—The Way Ahead and the Food Strategy**

In the years following the Second World War, Canada and the rest of the world were seeing modest but steadily mounting inflation, deemed necessary as the world recovered and economic growth began to take place. When inflation threatened to peak in the early 1970s, the federal government introduced an *Anti-Inflation Program* (October 1975) which imposed wage and price controls to stabilize Canada’s precarious position within a volatile market (Stewart & Gorbet, 1976). It also allowed the government to prepare a strategy that would address inflation and situate Canada as an enduring and leading player in the global marketplace. This strategy was introduced in October 1976 in a Working Paper entitled *The Way Ahead, A Framework for Discussion*, penned by Privy Council members Ian Stewart and Fred Gorbet. The authors introduced principles and strategies for policy which, consistent with neo-liberal ideology, saw the government take a step back from a direct role of intervention in the economy. The paper targeted two main areas: improvement in labour and management relations as a means to enhance competitiveness and attract investment in Canadian industry, and secondly, decentralization, seen as a way to support regional as well
as corporate interests. The Working Paper also focused on tightening the social purse strings and the expectation of individual and social responsibility, the development of cooperatives and volunteer organizations, and a shift from government to private providers of goods and services (Stewart & Gorbet, 1976). The overall focus of the Working Paper was to outline a move to fiscal restraint and individual responsibility, decreased government intervention, and an “increased reliance on and effectiveness of the market system” (p. 379).

In response to the Working Paper, the late Eugene Whalen, then Minister of Agriculture, and A.C. Abbott, Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, authored the White Paper titled *A Food Strategy for Canada*, in 1977. In this paper, Whalen and Abbott (1977) stated that “the future potential of Canada can best be realized and the goals of Canadians most fully achieved through increased reliance on an efficient market system” (p. 16). They reassured Canadians that new policy was intended “to improve the operating efficiency of markets in a manner which enhances the attainment of social goals within a framework of continuing government expenditure restraint with less, rather than more, direct government intervention in the economy” (p. 16).

In the mid-1970s, the discrepancy between what producers and processors received for their goods was significant. The White Paper notes that “food manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and retailers receive about sixty-two cents of every consumer dollar spent on food while farmers, fishermen and their employees receive thirty-eight cents” (Whalen & Abbott, 1977, p. 8). With this incongruity, the authors indicate “food is a matter of national concern” (p. 11), and that both the federal and provincial governments have and must continue to support and stabilize agriculture through solid policy, adding, “There are reasons to expect that this need will be even greater in the future because of the increased
variability of prices on international markets” (p. 11). The Food Strategy also pointed out that farmers were experiencing higher input costs including fuel, fertilizer, and equipment, as well as higher output costs, to attend to their debt. As a means to address these escalating costs, Whalen and Abbott stated that policy would be implemented to provide for stabilization, as well as capital investment for agricultural research and education, that would offer producers assistance to “adopt new products or technology and to respond more quickly to changed market circumstances” (p. 19). Stabilization and support for agriculture would also look to maintaining and developing “the efficiency of agriculture” and the protection of the income of “efficient producers” from “market price instability” and “production uncertainties” (pp. 17–18). They further remarked that problems resulting from marginal farmers “reflect serious structural problems” that would require “effective…development programs…as part of the broader approach to social security” (p. 18).

Programs included training and relocation assistance. With an eye to the development and growth of production and export, programs that addressed agricultural stability and efficiency would assure Canada’s continued role as a viable player in the world marketplace. The farm producers’ role within this mandate was to take individual responsibility for financial security and agricultural efficiency as a means to keep Canada snug in its global position.

**International Trade Policy—GATT and NAFTA**

Prior to the new Food Strategy, Canada was making its mark in the world marketplace. Canada was one of 24 countries who, in supporting the need for trade and economic growth, signed the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade* (GATT) in 1948 (World Trade Organization, 2013). The aim of this international trade agreement focused on
“developing the full use of the resources of the world and expanding the production and exchange of goods” through “substantial reduction of tariffs and other barriers to trade and to the elimination of discriminatory treatment in international commerce” (World Trade Organization, 2013, webpage). In 1994, the World Trade Organization (WTO) took over the administration of GATT and continues its promotion of sustainable development and economic growth and stability.

Canada continued to spread its wings in the world marketplace and establish itself as a powerful player and global entrepreneur with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 with the United States and Mexico (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2013). The objectives of NAFTA also included the elimination of “barriers to trade” and the facilitation of the “cross border movement of goods and services” between these continental North American countries (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2013, Chapter One: Objectives, Article 102, webpage). NAFTA champions “fair competition in free trade” and “investment opportunities” as a means to spur “economic growth and raising standards of living” for the three member countries and is deemed the “foundation for building Canada’s future prosperity and growth” and a “valuable example of the benefits of trade liberalization” (Chapter One: Objectives, Article 102, webpage). The signing of NAFTA solidifies Canada’s role in support of free flowing trade over the borders of its partners and opens the doors to investment in Canada.

**Impacts of Government Policies**

NAFTA espouses free trade as a means for prosperity and growth while the Food Strategy speaks to the federal government’s support of a market-based ideology. While remaining on the periphery in providing support and services, the government embraces this
as a means for Canadians to realize their social goals. National and international policies that promote increased reliance on the market result in significant changes to farming practices with the expectation of individual responsibility for the effectiveness of agriculture.

Dobbin (2001, cited in Qualman, 2001) suggests that corporate control of agriculture is supported by the “downsizing” of democracy, trumpeted by organizations, including the “Fraser Institute, Business Council on National Issues (comprised of 150 of the largest corporations in Canada) and the National Citizens Coalition” (p. 33). With this faction working in the interest of the marketplace, Dobbin states that corporations made the decision that “the social contract had expired” (p. 33) in favour of the market. With the enactment of free trade treaties and a new governmental strategy for agriculture, this dissolution of a social contract was fortified and enforced with just a small smattering of social interests, those of the corporations, in mind. Dobbin spoke to the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in Seattle, Washington in 1999, and the position taken by France that “agriculture should not be treated like any other economic sector” and it must recognized that “agriculture included many non-economic features—cultural, social, democratic, and community” (Dobbin, 2001, cited in Qualman, 2001, p. 37). Protestors at the Seattle negotiations echoed these sentiments in stating:

These deals are made exclusively in the interests of transnational corporations and they destroy community, culture and social cohesion. Indeed, it should be argued that every economic sector is “multi-functional”—culture, energy, finance, health, education, municipal services, transportation, etc.—because all of them have impacts that go far beyond the simple economic. (p. 37)

The National Farmers Union challenges the effectiveness of the marketplace in driving agriculture. Their Sixteen Point Plan for Canadian Farm and Food Security suggests
that “Governments squeamish at ‘intervening’ in ‘the markets’ are merely refusing to deal with the dramatic market failure that leaves our family farms staving financially in an agri-food chain awash in billions of dollars in profits” (2005, p. 4). The Plan points out that “the markets are broken—distorted and twisted by corporate market power increasingly unrestrained by competition” (p. 4) that has given rise to an imbalance of profits. Over the same time period that markets are expanding and flourishing and corporations are realizing these profits, farmers’ net incomes have seen a remarkable decline, fueling the farm income crisis “in spite of Canada’s tremendous success in winning market access and finding foreign customers” (p. 13, italics in original). Canada’s aggressive efforts to increase agricultural exports are a boon for the Canadian economy; however, behind this hard line stance is the Canadian Agri-Food Marketing Council, noted as a private sector group with sitting members from Maple Leaf Foods, Cargill, and McCains—large corporations that stand to reap huge profits. While the NFU states that the trade agreements of NAFTA and the WTO and the increased exports that they generate “may be one of the least significant effects of trade agreement…much more important for farmers—perhaps completely overwhelming any potential benefits of increased exports—may be the effect these agreements have on the balance of market power between farmers and the agribusiness corporations” (p. 13, italics in original). The elimination of trade barriers, according to the NFU, forces farmers into a “single, hyper-competitive market” (p. 13), while at the same time allowing agri-business mergers which decrease competition between the conglomerates. As a consequence, farmers’ earnings decrease, while minimal conglomerate competition allows for substantial increases in their revenues and feeds the vast imbalance in profits.
In light of trade agreements and increasing corporate control of agriculture, Wiebe (2001, cited in Qualman, 2001) indicates that Canada is facing a farm crisis that is “as near to us as our next meal” (p. 4). She voices grave concerns regarding who is controlling the food system, where our food is coming from, and the rising costs to put it on the table. This all reflects upon the sustainability and security of family farming operations and rural communities. Communities are realizing a loss of people and services as a result of the balancing act between the high production costs that global agriculture demands and low returns received by farmers (Fraser et al., 2005; Gregoire, 2002; Qualman, 2001). This imbalance results in conflict and competitiveness between farmers, the need for supplemental off-farm incomes, or in more extreme situations, bankruptcy and loss of family farms. Wiebe (2001, cited in Qualman, 2001) also voices concern regarding the rising age of farmers as younger people, out of necessity, migrate to seek employment opportunities elsewhere. These opportunities are resulting in a glut of urban migration that is placing stress on larger communities. The National Farmers Union (2005) states that current government policies and the power of corporations within the agricultural sector “will destroy the family farm within this generation” as “farm families are caught in a pincer: the farm income crisis is bearing down on them from one side, and corporate takeover is bearing down from the other” (p. 16). Qualman concurs and indicates that, in a 35-year span, from 1966 to 2001, the number of Canadian farmers dropped by almost half, leaving small communities on the receiving end of this blow and regional economies seeing red.

Agriculture has moved from small family ventures that afforded a unique joining of work and lifestyle as a sustainable means of world food production to large scale agri-business with higher costs of inputs, market dependent profits, and what appears to be a good
deal of decision making and control in the hands of a few transnational corporations. This new agriculture appears to ignore the needs of the small family farmers within this competitive global marketplace and results in the fragmentation of families and their communities. Impacts are noted in the literature regarding the social, economic, political, and cultural fabric of agricultural communities. These impacts are significant and beg the question of how farmers and their communities are managing these impacts.

**Mental Health Impacts**

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as “A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease” (2013, webpage), and is “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (webpage). Exploring literature, then, involved material that reflected these aspects in relation to the impacts experienced by prairie farmers in light of corporatized agriculture.

Brannen, Johnson Emberly, and McGrath (2009), in their study of stressors experienced by rural Canadian families, cite Folkman and Lazarus’ (1980) definition of psychological stress as “the result of an individual’s inability to effectively cope with a perceived threat” (p. 220). The means to cope with these threats lies in “social capital” and the “resilience” of an individual or community to moderate stress; these according to Brannan et al. include “community factors such as communication at the community level, leadership within the community, and intercommunity relationships and boundaries” (p. 220). Resilience, defined by Merriam-Webster online dictionary is “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change” (2013, webpage).
Contributing Factors of Psychological Stress

Literature indicates a number of factors that impact the mental well-being of farmers. Fraser, C., Smith, K., Judd, F., Humphreys, J., Fragar, L., & Henderson, A. (2005) indicate “significant psychological hazards associated with agriculture” including high levels of stress, depression and anxiety (p. 341). They indicate that factors contributing to ill health include the uncertainty of the market and of the weather, government policy and regulation of agriculture and the environment, escalating production costs, and the loss of farms and farm livelihoods. Brannen et al. (2009) reiterate these factors and add that population loss, social isolation, depleted social infrastructure including schools, hospitals, and other community resources are found to be contributors as well. They speak of the government restructuring of economic and social policies and the consequential loss of social and economic capital in communities. These losses are described as depopulation and the departure of social supports that result from community relationships and the social services that rob communities of activities. This disruption of community stability leaves in its wake a sense of tension and anxiety (Brannen et al., 2009). Malone (2011) concurs and adds that the unsettling of economic instability breeds increased unemployment, underemployment, and escalating poverty, particularly for women and children. Then, as the needs of people change and intensify, their ability to perform their roles as community members decreases and a fragmentation of informal support systems occurs. This, states Malone, gives rise to increased mental distress.

Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) identify seven themes that impact farmers’ mental wellness. These include financial concerns, family stress due to economic situations, uncontrollable events such as weather and government programs, the ability to cope, the
salvation of the family, the physical hazards of modern farming, and farm culture. The key concern identified was financial instability. Consistent with the preceding literature, this theme is described by Sturgeon and Morrissette as financial loss and restraints, debt load, and unrelenting financial uncertainty. They identify sources of stress as the need for supplemental off-farm employment, long working hours, expanded roles within the farming operation, and role overload—dual roles of farm and off-farm work that can include both partners in the farming venture. Farm culture includes factors such as isolation, the feeling of little or no social recognition, pride, and values that hinder seeking out professional help, and deem people from outside the agricultural community as unable to understand the farming situation.

Family farm structure and location are noted as prominent factors in coping with stress. The farm as the location of both work and home can result in the boundaries between the two becoming “blurred with farming operating as both an occupation and way of life for many farmers” (Fraser et al., 2005, p. 342). The location of farms in close proximity to family members provides the benefit of support; however, this contiguity can also lead to conflict regarding roles and responsibilities between family members and “family problems can become work problems and work difficulties can create family tensions” (p. 342). In this situation, the authors state that it is the younger generation of farmers that are most affected by family conflict.

**Farm Men and Stress**

For farm men, typically socialized in traditional and paternalistic roles, with their identity fixed to success and provision for the family, may feel their traditional roles and sense of worth jeopardized as a result of the farming situation (Fraser et al., 2005). Sturgeon
and Morrissette (2010) echo this and add that men are socialized to be independent and emotionally removed, leaving them in precarious positions with few coping strategies when faced with increasing stress. Fraser et al. indicated that cumulated stress, as opposed to that of a specific event, can be a precursor to suicide by farm men. Increased rates of suicide are attributed to high incidences of depression as well as easier access to lethal means; farmers are more likely to use firearms as a means of completing suicide than their urban counterparts. Sturgeon and Morrissette state that farm deaths are less likely to be deemed as suicide due to stigma and the impact to the farming population. They cite the World Health Organization’s indicators of suicide among farmers include “higher rates of depression, hazardous work environments, easy access to pesticides, reduced access to emergency services, high job stress and social isolation” (2013, p. 193).

**Farm Women and Stress**

Fraser et al. (2005) and Brannen et al. (2009) found that women have higher levels of stress and depression than men. Women not only feel their own stress, but tend to worry about the welfare of family members who are impacted by the challenges associated with farming. While Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) agree that women tend to reach out for help in regard to concerns for someone else, they question if women then experience less stress or if they have better coping skills than men. Perhaps it is that women put the needs of others before their own needs, typical of their caregiving role. Stress levels for women are also attributed to what is referred to as a third shift (Brannen et al., 2009; Fraser et al., 2005). Farm women, traditionally in the role of caregiver of the children and the home, have now taken on more on-farm work as well as off-farm work, leading to a triple shift of duty in order to assist in keeping the farm afloat. The consequences in maintaining these multiple
roles are stress and fatigue. Brannen et al. indicate that women are more likely to feel the stress of isolation and loneliness that is found in a rural and farming lifestyle.

**Access and Availability of Resources**

The impacts as a result of a changing agriculture produce a range of stressors that are experienced by farmers. These stressors can be mitigated by factors of resiliency, often through informal supports. Ineffective coping, however, that can manifest from farm stress, may include depression and anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, and anger and aggression (Brannen et al., 2009). Suicide, especially in farm men, has seen an increase as a result of the unrelenting demands of agriculture and a hesitancy in seeking supports.

A weakening of informal supports, as suggested in the literature, due to the disintegration of community and a more individualistic stance within the ideological framework of today’s society, removes an important resource in alleviating stressors and addressing resultant behaviours. Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) indicate that socio-cultural characteristics may act as barriers to seeking help. These, they suggest, include an increased competitiveness and reduced cooperation among farmers and community members that can stifle reaching out to informal supports.

Resourcing formal supports can also present a challenge for farmers. Fraser et al. (2005) and Malone (2011) note a lack of available and accessible resources to support the mental wellness of farmers. Along with accessibility and availability, Malone states that characteristics of rural people such as “higher levels of pride, independence, and stoic behaviour” as well as “socially influenced or collective attitudes toward mental health” (p. 290) can result in increased stigmatization in regards to mental health and places a barrier to accessing services. Fraser et al. agree and indicate that the greater visibility of mental
illness found in small communities can lead to shame and fear of judgement and can impede help-seeking actions. Another potential hurdle can been seen, based on perceptions held by farmers, that professionals have a limited understanding of agriculture and the needs of farmers.

Access to helping professionals is impacted by physical hurdles as well, including poor roads and distance to services for the more remote communities (Fraser et al., 2005). Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) concur that geographic constraints such as isolation and distance may encumber the enlistment of professional resources. Economic situations must also be taken into consideration. Obstacles to pursuing formal support can include costs for services as well as the expense of travel, potential childcare, and time away from farm and off-farm employment. A lack of awareness of community resources may play a role in accessing helping services.

In spite of the availability of some mental health services, Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) indicate that farmers, especially men, tend to seek physician and religious support rather than mental health care. The stoicism characteristic of farmers can lead to them seek informal supports through family, friends, and other farmers (Brannen et al., 2009; Fraser et al., 2005). This leads Malone (2011) to question if the more inclusiveness of small communities allows individual needs to be seen as a community concern, thus resulting in the community safety net as a source for informal support. These collective community values of members, she suggests, can provide a sense of hope, shaping successful communication, interconnectedness, and involvement as a means of addressing concerns. A consequence of this, however, can be the assumption by community members that they should have unlimited knowledge of others, thus compromising privacy and increasing the
pressure of meeting community expectations. Peck et al. (2002, cited in Fraser et al., 2005) state that farmers may forego help altogether and take the attitude of “just getting on with it” (p. 345).

Gaps and Limitations of Literature

In studies undertaken to explore the changes due to corporate agriculture and what some are calling a farm crisis, literature refers to the direct influence to individuals and communities including financial, cultural, social, and political impacts. There was limited literature regarding age and gender, as well as the impacts of such consequences as urban migration and employment options. There appears to be a gap in studying the impacts on rural communities and the characteristics of the communities that provide for the ways and means that their members are managing these impacts.

Brannen et al. (2009) indicate that “the family and not just the individual is undergoing considerable change and presumably stress” (p. 225). They state that more research is needed to learn of the stress that is occurring and the means to address it. Fraser et al. (2005) suggest that the “characteristics of farming families may also provide a buffer against these stressors and assist them to develop resilience” (p. 346) as they cope with the changes in their agricultural landscape. They urge more research regarding the resiliency of farming communities in order to identify these characteristics so that concerted effort can be made to support such resiliency.

Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) suggest that further research is needed to explore the rates of suicide within farm populations as well as the effect of farm stress on women and children. It is unclear whether women experience less stress as their help-seeking actions are typically noted as accessing help for others. In regards to children, Sturgeon and Morrissette
suggest that children tend to be more concerned with the situations they see their parents experiencing and thus have increased stress as a result. The benefits of research will offer mental health counsellors a greater understanding of the unique nature of farmers’ experiences and concerns and will in turn be able to provide more appropriate services to their farm clients.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature revealed three major events in agriculture: grain transportation, marketing, and national and international policy. All events are driven by a market-focused ideology that impacts the way farmers do business. There is a shift away from government support and a leaning toward individual responsibility as a means for efficiency in agriculture. The impact of this new trend in farming has unsettled the economic, social, cultural, and political stability of communities and has placed great burdens of stress on farmers and their communities. The battering to the mental wellness of communities as a result of this weight is addressed in the literature along with the consequences and the means by which communities strive to manage the strain of their lifestyles and livelihoods.

The political and economic impacts are witnessed in government’s endorsement of and reliance on global market forces in the management of agriculture. Legislation has resulted in a loss of market protection for farmers, with the abolishment of the Crow Rate and the imminent termination of the Canadian Wheat Board. Canada’s Food Policy, introduced in the 1970s, with more recent amendments propagating the same market ideology, has seen government stepping back their support for agricultural producers and removing the safety net that supported farmers in their efforts and enterprise and offered them a strong voice in agricultural policy making.
This new agriculture plays havoc with the social fabric of small communities by severing an interconnectedness that offers cooperation and support for one another. The collective voice that lobbies for a secure, stable, and fulfilling lifestyle has been dealt a blow with a focus on individual responsibility and competitiveness that can pit neighbour against neighbour in the struggle to stay viable in a market that can be hostile. The social network of communities is also fragmenting as members migrate elsewhere in search of sustainable options, as the opportunities and resources in their home towns disappear.

The culture of agriculture and community is impacted with the loss of the Crow Rate—as the ‘Magna Carta of the Western farmer’ (Diefenbaker, cited in Orchard, 2000) and the Canadian Wheat board, dubbed “the centrepiece of agricultural policy” (Magnan, 2011, p. 10). These institutions of agricultural development were born of the collective values and beliefs of the farmers that ‘opened the west’ and helped build Canada’s national dream. The culture of cooperation and community support, of pride and belief in the livelihood and lifestyle of farming is shaken within an individualized society. The sharing of the farming practices, customs, and traditions of diverse groups of people that made communities lively and vibrant has been splintered, as farmers strive to compete in the global marketplace, and where competition compromises community.

The literature afforded a look at the impacts of corporate agriculture and the disruption to the mental wellness of communities. The stress of farmers has risen substantially and their means of coping can be result in a barrage of behaviours that further fragments families and communities. The strength of community, however, is seen as a mitigating factor in the midst of turmoil and holds together communities in a force of resistance and resiliency.
The next chapter will describe the research methodology that took me into a small rural community to speak with members about their experiences with corporate agriculture.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will outline the research process beginning with a discussion regarding the aim of the research and the theoretical framework used. The research design and site, the ethical considerations, and the recruitment methods will be explained, followed by the process of data collection and analysis. The chapter will conclude with comments regarding the strengths and limitations of the research.

Aim of this Research

The re-structuring of agriculture as a result of corporate enterprise leaves small family farmers competing with large corporate landholders, juggling the economic challenges of the marketplace, and searching for services and supports in the midst of disappearing communities. In this context, the goal of my research was to gain an appreciation and understanding of the impacts of the corporatization of agriculture on a rural prairie community. Through a community case study, the implications to the community’s social, political, economic, and cultural framework were examined, and the characteristics of the community explored in relationship to its reaction, resistance, and resiliency in light of these impacts. For a comprehensive understanding, the impacts to the community were examined from a local as well as a professional mental health perspective.

The mental health perspective was deemed a means to clarify the stress experienced by the community, from a helping point of view, and to provide an avenue for further understanding of the unique needs of the farming population as they adapt to significant changes. Community characteristics, identified from this perspective, provided information
regarding a source of security and informal support within the community and also offered insight into the helping resources available within a rural setting.

From the community, I sought the story of change and the impacts as a result. The historical legacy provided through the telling of stories and the lessons learned from them could be a means of support to the community as it maneuvers through the corporatization of agriculture. The insight and knowledge as a result of this research could potentially benefit this and other small rural communities as they look to maintain an identity and a sense of community within a changing landscape.

**Theoretical Framework**

Brown and Strega (2005) state that “[m]arginalization refers to the context in which those who routinely experience inequality, injustice, and exploitation live their lives” (p. 6). An anti-oppressive framework, according to Dominelli (2002), endeavours to de-construct dominant institutional and structural norms that oppress, marginalize, and compromise an individual’s or groups’ chance for success. It supports socially just and empowering actions. As the structural framework of agriculture has been re-shaped to fit into a trade liberalization ideology, farmers are facing inequality and exploitation by transnational corporations and the governments that support them. Government policies, re-worked to tout market efficiency and individual responsibility, have resulted in an uneven playing field within a highly competitive marketplace. The viability of farming communities in the wake of a corporate lust for power and control over the marketplace and world’s food supply, illustrates Dominelli’s (2002) statement that “oppression is socially constructed through people’s actions with and behaviours towards others” (p. 9). Dominelli continues, “the dynamics of oppression are evident in every aspect of the human condition, and are especially evident in
its psychological, social, economic and political fields” (p. 9). As the oppressive nature of corporate enterprise ploughs through agriculture as we knew it and unsettles all of the aspects of community, it sets the stage for an anti-oppressive framework as the methodological backbone of this research.

In utilizing the premise of critical theory that is “motivated by emancipatory claims informed by a critique of dominance” and the “conscious intention of producing social change” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 46), my goal was to explore the oppression that is present in the institutional structure of corporatized agriculture and its impacts on a small rural community. In step with Neuman and Kruger’s (2003) statement that “critical theory seeks to provide people with a resource that will help them understand and change their world” (p. 87), the ways in which institutional oppression impacted the community of study and its reaction, resistance and resiliency in light of this oppression provided the context for this research. Further to an anti-oppressive framework, research results will be left in the hands of the community to disseminate as they see fit and to proceed with social action that is in line with their community’s needs and wishes.

**Methodology: The Case Study**

In this research, a community case study was employed as a means of inquiry. The instrumental case study method, according to Stake (2005), is utilized when a “particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (p. 445). Stake indicates that key issues are fundamental in research planning and need to be identified in terms of what information can be gleaned. Significant changes experienced by the community of study as a result of corporate agriculture steered the way to the key issues of the research: the impacts to the community as well as the characteristics of the community
that helped guide its response and allowed for potential mitigation of the impacts. As Stake indicates, an instrumental case study leaves open the options to explore other aspects of the case. Thus, when the topic of mental wellness arose from dialogue with research participants regarding effective and ineffective coping mechanisms, the option to further explore this avenue resulted in conversation from within a mental health perspective.

According to Gillman (2000), Neuman and Krueger (2003), and Yin (2009), a case study can include an individual, a group, an institution, or a community and is useful in investigating the actions of people within the context of their life experiences. Further to this, Stake (2005) indicates that a case study makes use of experiential knowledge that highlights “social, political and other contexts” (p. 52). Yin also champions the effectiveness of studying in depth “organizational, social, political and related phenomena” afforded through case studies (p. 4). This feature of case study research collates with an anti-oppressive framework as it delves into these aspects and their unsettling at the hands of institutional oppression.

The case study approach in this research allowed for exploration of such contexts through a time frame when agriculture was introduced to significant change beginning in the early 1970s up to the present. The continuum of change throughout this period and its current presence speaks to Neuman and Krueger’s (2003) statement that a person’s reality is not static and is subject to change. Thus, the case study of the community allowed for stories to be told by its longstanding members as they related to both historical as well as ‘here and now’ experiences. These stories revealed the social, political, economic, and cultural geography of their community, as well as the troubling of these same phenomena as a result
of corporate agriculture. Their experiences provided a chronological trek through the time frame encompassed in the study and provided rich detail to the story of their community.

Stake (2005) cautions that it is “risky to leave it to the case actors to select the stories to be conveyed” as the stories told may not be useful (p. 456). With this in mind, a guideline of the points that I wished to cover in the research was prepared and provided to participants. The guideline supports Gillman’s (2000) belief that the use of questions can occur in a natural conversation format. Key points noted in the guideline provided a segue into a conversational, yet guided, opportunity for participants to tell their story about their community. As participants recounted their experiences, I was able to tease out descriptions of events that enhanced the stories and resulted in answers to my research question.

The community of study, located in central Saskatchewan, is geographically distanced from my home in Victoria and led to some challenges within a case study framework. Not only was this distance physical, it was also social and cultural. Gillman (2000) suggests that gaining a clear understanding of the feelings and behaviours of a community can only be genuinely realized if the researcher gets to know the community from “their world and what they are trying to do in it”(p. 2). Fortunately, the time frame for the research offered an opportunity for me to visit the community during the research process. Through the paternal ties that I have to this community, I had some prior knowledge of the community through the sharing of memories by family members. My time living on a small family farm that shares a similar organizational culture also gave me insight into this community and afforded me the opportunity to try to make sense of the experiences of the research participants and the meanings that they assign to them.
Gillman (2000) also stresses the need to keep an open mind when collecting data and to remain cognizant of the “conceptual baggage” (p. 18) that, as researchers, we bring to the process. He suggests that our own experiences can lead us to assume a “privileged understanding of others in similar contexts” (p. 18). Thus, I had to remain cognizant that my own experiences living in rural Saskatchewan were not the same as those of longstanding members of the focus community. My time living this lifestyle was minimal while the baggage that I bear, based on my experiences, would hold similarities, yet many differences from those of longstanding members. According to Brown and Strega (2005), an anti-oppressive framework in research keeps at the fore the differences and experiences of participants as well as the position and experiences of the researcher. Within this frame, I also had to remain aware that the oppressive forces that were impacting the community members were also influencing me, albeit from within a different perspective, and could place me on a fine line between bias and objectivity within this research endeavour. The effectiveness of the instrumental case study, however, with its focus on the experiential knowledge of participants, was a steadying force for me as the researcher. In accordance with Stake (2005), who indicates that this methodology provides options to explore other aspects of the case, this research allowed me to scrutinize the market-focused ideology in greater detail and gain a broader understanding of its principles, and hence the determination of governments and global enterprise to promote its mandate.

Gillman (2000) states that the “use of multiple sources of evidence, each with its strengths and weaknesses, is a key characteristic of case study research” (p. 2). Yin (2009) also states that a “unique strength” of a case study is its “ability to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artifacts, interviews and observations” (p. 11). Gillman continues to
state that multiple sources of evidence provide important data including “what people say, what you see them doing, what they make or produce, what documents and records show” (p. 20, emphasis in original). For a clear understanding of what was occurring in the community, evidence collected for this research included multiple sources. Along with the stories of research participants, I explored secondary data including statistics, artifacts, and photographs. This data provided information regarding the community’s demographic status and growth and depression during the time frame in which major events of change were taking place in agriculture. Information from the stories and secondary sources provided a rich source of data regarding the experiences of the community, the impacts and the means by which the community has been able to reconcile these changes.

**Research Site**

In order to conduct this research, I sought out a small rural community in south-central Saskatchewan whose members have experienced numerous changes as their community loses ground to corporate enterprise. The target community was chosen for a number of reasons. First, the community is in the agricultural heartland of the province and stakes claim to both grain and cattle production. Secondly, this area has previously been unsullied by the influence of the oil and gas industry that is currently unleashed in the province today. The community saw only a glimpse of peripheral industry in the way of potash and sodium sulphate mining and was almost solely reliant on agriculture. Thus, this community would accentuate the way in which agriculture is of utmost importance as a means of livelihood and lifestyle. Thirdly, my initial random contacts with some of the community members suggested that they were keenly interested in this research as their firsthand view has left them saddened, yet optimistically hopeful, regarding the changes seen
in their community. The fourth reason speaks to my distant, yet distinct connection to the community as the settlement home of my paternal grandparents and the birth community of my father.

The community of study is characteristic of many small rural communities in the province in its size, history, and economic foundation in agriculture. Like many other prairie communities in our country’s early nation building scheme, it was established along the Canadian Pacific Railway line that opened up Canada’s western provinces to settlement with the promises of adventure, free land, and fortune (Steward, 1989). The community once boasted a thriving economic, political, and social structure with all the amenities needed for busy living. This community has experienced the changes that were born to agriculture and resulted in the migration of people and services to more profitable locations. It now struggles to maintain some semblance of identity. Hence, it meets the geographic and demographic objectives for a case study of community change and its longstanding community members are representative of populations found in many small towns scattered throughout rural Saskatchewan.

**Ethical Considerations**

Community members were asked to take an active role in the research process through sharing their stories about their community. Thus, ethical approval for research on human subjects was required and application was made to and approved by the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria (Appendix A).

Consideration was undertaken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality throughout each stage of the research. These measures began with recruitment. Brochures distributed to each household mailbox within the community of study outlined the premise of the research
and requested that potential participants contact me directly using the information provided on the brochure. When contacted, I discussed these components of the research with potential participants. Anonymity, described in the Ethics application, indicates that any information that might identify research participants should not be present in interview material or other data. Participants were advised that every effort would be made to collect data in an interview setting where the nature of the conversation would not be overheard or where they may observed by others. Confidentiality is described in the Ethics application as the “protection of the person’s identity (anonymity) and the protection, access, control and security of his or her data and personal information” during each stage of the research process (Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, University of Victoria, p. 14). As a means to ensure confidentiality, participants were not identified and any distinguishable information was removed from the data. Participants were provided an opportunity to view their interview transcript and were asked to vet any information that they did not wish to appear in the final written document or oral presentation. The identity of their community was also protected by referencing it as ‘the community’ in written and oral material. Limits to confidentiality that were beyond the control of the researcher were explained to participants at the time of recruitment. Due to the small size of their community, research participants were advised that other community members may discern who was involved in the research due to their association with me. Participants were advised to withdraw their interest in the research if this was uncomfortable for them. Anonymity and confidentiality were discussed both verbally at recruitment as well as in reviewing the written information included in the Consent Form for Participation in a
Research Study (Appendix B). Each research participant was required to sign this document indicating their informed consent to participate prior to the research.

The methods of storage of participant data as well as the means of destroying this information upon completion of the research project was discussed with participants as well, as outlined in the consent to participate document. Participants were asked for permission to audiotape their conversations as a means of ensuring accuracy. As a means of security, the recorded conversations were stored as sound files on my personal, password-protected computer, and written material was locked in a filing cabinet in my home office. Participants were advised that data would be analysed and documented in a final report submitted to my academic supervisor and committee for this research project. Once the research was completed, recorded information would be deleted from my personal computer and written information would be shredded.

Ethical consideration was taken regarding a level of emotional risk to the research participants regarding possible losses within the context of this research, including those of livelihood and land. This potential for risk was discussed with participants as well as their informal systems of support and formal mental health services available.

As the conversations with research participants took place, an avenue for additional and pertinent data regarding the impacts to the mental wellness of community members in addressing change was presented. In consideration of this potential for further data regarding effective and ineffective coping mechanisms, and resources in place to support the mental wellness of the community, a submission for a Modification of an Approved Protocol (Appendix C) was provided to the Human Research Ethics Board. Upon approval, this modification afforded me the opportunity to speak with persons involved in the provision of
mental health services. This provided a more comprehensive exploration of the impacts experienced by communities, their means of coping, and the resources that are available to them. As with the community members, ethical parameters of the research were discussed verbally as well as noted in the consent to participate document. As a means of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality, the name and location of this participant was not identified and any distinguishable information was removed from the data.

Power over is a component of ethical research and seeks to address the fact that a researcher may be in a position of authority over participants. Dominelli (2002) states “Power over is the expression of relations of dominance” and goes on to explain that power over is exercised by one in a relationship who uses “their ‘allocative and authoritative resources’ to define social relationships in ways that favour the group that is deemed superior” (p. 17, italics in original). In the relationship between the researcher and the research participants, there is a risk that the researcher may presume an ‘authoritative’ role with their affiliation with the University of Victoria as well as an ‘allocative’ role as principal investigator. The binary positioning of researcher-participant can, as noted by Brown and Strega (2005), place participants, in particular those on the margins, as “the objects but rarely the authors of research” (p. 7). The framework of just research that I applied established participants as co-researchers with the intent to work in collaboration to reach an outcome in the research study. This alleviated a situation of participants deemed as subjects within the research paradigm and addressed any notion of a power imbalance.

The power differential between corporate agriculture and that of small family farms, however, is a focus of this research and also requires note. Chambon, Irving, and Epstein (1999) cite Foucault’s statement that “in human relations…power is always present” (p. 162).
Foucault, they suggest, does not deny power imbalances in relationships “including the practical advantage enjoyed by one party in this relationship over the other” (p. 163). This research explored the notion of power held in the hands of the corporate community and gives evidence of advantage over small family farmers and the communities they call home. This wielding of power suggests that the participants in this research are subordinates of a dominant corporate power within an inequitable and exploitative corporate/community dichotomy. In view of this placement, being cognizant that the community also has power within this relationship was vital. They have the power to resist and to collectively rise against this oppressive situation in asking for equality and justice. This research provides indications of collective resistance and future opportunities for the same.

**Recruitment Methods**

As a means to inform the community of this research project and invite their participation, I designed a brochure (Appendix D), approved by the Human Research Ethics Board. The brochure outlined the premise of the research, indicated the time commitment, the demographic parameters for research participants, and included my contact information. The brochure was reproduced onto brightly coloured paper with the intent to attract community members and bring attention to its contents.

In order to distribute the brochures to each community household within the Rural Municipality (RM) wherein the focus community lies, I utilized the Canada Post Direct Mail-Unaddressed Admail Program (Canada Post, 2012). The Admail Program provides for a mass distribution of brochures or similar mail to each mailbox at an identified location. The Canada Post website includes a Small Business Products and Services link which offers a Targeter Option that determines the household counts within a specific area. By using this
option, an accurate number of brochures were bundled for distribution, as per Admail specifications. The postal codes for the two post office locations within the municipality were identified through the Canada Post website and the brochures were mailed en masse to each household mailbox. The few businesses within the municipality were identified through a conversation with the RM Administrator (personal communication, M. Guillemin, September 29, 2011). Letters (Appendix E), approved by the Human Research Ethics Board that outlined the research and invited participation, were sent to these businesses with an enclosed brochure and a request to post the brochure in a visible location as a means of attracting potential participants. Follow-up telephone calls were made to the local businesses to ensure receipt of the letters and brochures and to answer questions regarding the research.

As the nature of the research falls within the scope of a research project as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work, the number of participants needed would be limited to that of a project. Thus, a minimum of three and maximum of six participants were required. The research was specific to events from the 1960s to the present; thus, participants were sought from longstanding members of the community between the ages of 40 and 80 years. When contact was made with community members, the premise of the research and their roles as participants was explained, along with the requirement for informed and written consent. As I was unable to be on site in the community, the consent document, interview guideline, and a self-addressed and stamped envelope for the return of the signed consent form was mailed to participants. Once the signed consent forms were returned, a telephone interview date and time were confirmed. Contact was made with one participant while I was on site and documents were provided, discussed, and signed in person.
Three participants were interviewed as the representative voice for their community. In order for a collective voice, and for validity, it was important to have a cross-section of participants. Therefore, those involved included two male and one female farmer of a generation that have been farming for over 40 years. One male has farmed exclusively, while the other male and female participant had off-farm income to support their farming operations. All three participants have passed the reins of farming to their children. The male participants both continue to farm in supportive positions, while the female participant is now fully retired. There were no participants in this community that were known to me personally or professionally.

The approval of the modification to my ethics application allowed me to collect data from within the mental health realm. As a means of recruitment, I spoke with the manager of the regional office of Saskatchewan Mental Health and Addictions for the area in which the target community is situated. I described my research project and my desire to speak with a mental health professional for a more comprehensive look at the impacts felt by the community. The manager contacted the community office and requested that interested staff contact me in confidence. As a result, I was able to have a telephone conversation with a mental health and addictions counsellor, the fourth participant of the research team.

Data Collection Methods

The methods of inquiry of this project placed the community of focus and its members as central to the research. Brown and Strega (2005) state that, historically, knowledge of a subject has been determined to be legitimate only if it was produced “by certain people in certain ways,” typically placing those marginalized as “the objects but rarely the authors of research” (p. 7). In response “social justice approaches to
research…have attempted to position those who might have traditionally been the objects or respondents of research as equal collaborators or co-researchers” (Brown & Strega, p. 7). In this research, community members were intentionally placed in the position of co-researchers and not seen as objects to be studied. As noted earlier, in choosing the community for the case study, community members had indicated a desire to explore the situation that their community is facing and to gain a greater understanding through the sharing of perspectives and collective desire for this knowledge. Knowledge gained as a result of research plays an important role. Potts and Brown (2005) state “the ownership of knowledge” should remain in “the hands of those who experience it, who need it” (p. 261). Thus, the participants are the keepers of the knowledge that they brought to the research and learned as the result of it. This knowledge belongs to the community and the actions that may result from it are for the community to determine. The knowledge that I gained in this collaboration includes a greater understanding of the challenges faced by this and other communities in this changing enterprise and the inherent strengths that guide them through these trials.

This participation of community members, as co-researchers telling the story of their community, placed them in positions as key informants. Tremblay (1957) states that key informants provide a rich source of information that can include data about their economic system, political structure, cultural beliefs, and traditions. Marshall (1996) echoes the effectiveness of this technique in relation to the “breadth and depth of information” and the “quality of ideas and richness of information” learned from informants (p. 94). As the aim of this research was to collect information specific to the impacts of corporatized agriculture and the means by which the community reconciled these impacts, the key informant technique was deemed an effective tool to gather the information needed for clarity and
understanding of this topic. Within this process, as representatives of their community, participants spoke of the changes they have experienced as well as the impacts to the social, cultural, political, and economic organization of their community. Tremblay (1957) affirms that the key informant technique is an effective means to gather information within a short period of time. Collecting information within a specific time frame was an important consideration in this research project based on my limited time in the community as well as that of academic parameters.

Tremblay (1957) states that key informants are chosen “strategically, considering the structure of the society and the content of the inquiry” (p. 689). Criteria regarding this selection include the key informants’ role in the community, their knowledge, willingness, skills in communicating, and their impartiality. Marshall (1996), however, indicates that “Informants are unlikely to represent, or even understand, the majority of views of those individuals in their community (p. 93). As the scope of the research was only going to allow for a small number of key informant conversations, I relied on the Tremblay’s notion that “in every sizable community there are one or two individuals with particular skills as informants” (p. 692). Tremblay refers to these individuals using Alexander Leighton’s term “natural observers” (p. 692). These individuals are said to hold positions in their community that affords them a general knowledge of human behaviour, a broad view of structural organization, and the skills of inference and interpretation regarding this knowledge. The demographics of the participants in this research, longstanding members of the community, fit well within the parameters outlined by Tremblay as good informers. The participants are all socially active and have a comprehensive knowledge of their community through their organizational, administrative, and leadership roles. All of the participants have worked as
farmers and have experienced intergenerational cooperation as a means for success in their work, their personal lives, and in their community roles. Three of the four participants have also worked in other professional roles in their community aside from farming. Their positions offered a varied, as well as a collective perspective and understanding of the events that the community has experienced. They have participated in establishing the community’s value and belief structure and are thus well versed in and have a stake in the cultural security and sense of community that is afforded its members. These informants, in their roles of trust, are also in a solid position to act as catalysts of change in their community.

**Data Collection**

Primary data were collected from participant stories while secondary data was derived from statistics, artifacts, and photographs. Primary data was gathered from longstanding members of the community who, in key informant roles, provided information through semi-structured conversations that were guided by ten key points (Appendix F). The points focused on significant changes and the impacts to the community’s social, economic, political, and cultural framework. The guideline directed conversation in the ways the community has reacted to and resisted change and shown resiliency. Points of conversation also included the characteristics of the community and how they help or hinder the community during times of change. The topic of aging farmers and the need or choice of younger people to migrate to larger centres for employment was presented in order to generate conversation regarding the sustainability of agriculture as it operates within a corporate framework. The narrative was concluded with a sharing of participants’ greatest memories and their wishes for their community today. In the conversation that took place with the mental health professional, the same procedure was employed. The guideline
included seven key points which focused on the changes to the agricultural community as seen from a mental health perspective and stressors experienced as the result of the noted changes (Appendix G). Healthy and unhealthy behavioural trends and the ways in which people are successful or unsuccessful in their coping with change were presented. The guideline concluded with the resources and supports that are available and the resiliency observed that lends support to the mental well-being of the community.

The points allowed for the conversations to remain within the parameters of the research, yet afforded flexibility in the telling of the stories. The guideline was provided to participants prior to our conversations to allow for reflection and to support a relatively free flowing narrative. The flexible nature of the conversation provided an opportunity for information sharing beyond the key points and allowed for valuable data to be collected. This solidifies the notion that the participants are the experts of their lives and highlights the value of a free narrative format as a means for relationship building and the sharing of information.

Due to my limited time in the community, three of the four conversations took place by telephone. The conversations were approximately one to two hours in duration and were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy. Once the interviews were completed they were transcribed, and a copy of the transcription was sent to research participants by mail. Subsequent telephone calls were made to participants in order to verify information and to discuss any material that participants wished vetted from the transcript and not used in the final written and oral reports. Further clarification was sought at this time regarding participant comments and additional questions arising from the interview were posed.

The telephone conversations, while offering the opportunity for rapport building and lively and informative conversation, did not allow for the non-verbal messages important in
communication. Gillman (2000) states, however, that telephone interviewing “offers some virtues” of a face to face meeting and is most effective in “small scale research” (p. 77). A good part of the rapport building in the telephone interviews was the initial call when I explained my interest in the research and my distant connection to the community. Fortunately, time allowed for visits to the community for follow-up conversations with two of the participants interviewed by telephone, as well as a face to face conversation with a third. During the visits, the initial conversations were discussed and additional information provided through informal conversation. These visits gave evidence of the passion and belief that these members have in their community and re-enforced the importance and benefit of in-person conversation and interaction within a case study format. These opportunities provided for reflection regarding challenges faced in data collection. The geographical distance and limited time in the community were barriers and provided a valuable lesson in case study research where, as Gillman (2000) stresses, it is important to know the community of study.

A benefit of the qualitative research approach taken was the use of the semi-structured conversations that allowed for the story of the community to be told from the perspective of the community members. This provided for the feelings and emotions of the participants to be heard and afford a view of the community beyond the physical. The physical landscape of the community tells its own story. I saw a community that is broken and disappearing. In the stories that were told, however, I saw a community still strong in its cultural, social, and political connections, and managing in its economic ambitions. Completing the transcription of the recorded conversations provided opportunities for a better understanding of the changes and impacts experienced by the community as well as the
coping mechanisms applied to alleviate them. This greater awareness was beneficial during follow-up conversations with the participants and paved the way for positive rapport and additional information gathering. This set the framework for the development of patterns, themes and subthemes in my analysis of the data.

The limitations of the qualitative method and the use of conversational data could result in researcher bias. I bring my own experiences and the meanings and perceptions that I assign them to the research. Gillman (2000) cautions a researcher’s perceived privilege of understanding based on their own experiences and advises the importance of awareness of this foible. Therefore, checking in on my own perceptions and biases through reflection was an important part of the data collection and analysis.

Secondary data provided baseline information and corroboration of the primary data. Gillman (2000) states that documents “provide a formal framework to which you may have to relate the informal reality” (p. 21). In the blending of the primary and secondary data, I gained a more complete picture of the community. The secondary data was comprised of information from Statistics Canada, artifacts which included several history books of the region as well as photographs. Statistical information included changes in the farming venture and was used as a measure of the economic impacts as well as an exploratory of the mental health and wellness of the Saskatchewan population. The mental health statistics provided corroboration of the data noted in the conversation with the mental health counselor. The behavioural trends noted in the statistics were also used as a comparative with the overall trends in Canada to determine how the province was faring within the country.

Data also included notes jotted down in my research journal regarding observations of the community, comments from people that I spoke with over the telephone and encountered
in my Saskatchewan visits, as well as my thoughts and reflections of the research as it progressed. When secondary data were related to the primary information gathered in the participant conversations, one substantiated the other and offered validation to the research data.

**Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was utilized as a means to analyse the primary data collected in conversations with community members as well as the secondary data found in statistical information and artifacts. Braun and Clark (2006) state “a rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions” (p. 28). Aronson (1994) adds that in studying the data, patterns occur and are seen as “being important to the description of the phenomenon” being studied and result from the “themes and patterns of living and/or behaviours” (p. 1). The intent of my research was to gain an appreciation for and an understanding of the impacts that a small, rural community was experiencing as a result of corporate agriculture, as well as the community’s means to reconcile this situation. Thus, thematic analysis would allow for an examination of the data based on participants’ lived experiences as told through their stories and provide an avenue to flush out key points to satisfy my research question. Leininger (1985) adds that thematic analysis results in “bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone” (cited in Aronson, 1994, p. 1). This was particularly helpful in collating the data from the four different conversations, as well as the secondary data and in channeling this data into meaningful patterns and themes. This approach also offers a perspective into the social and psychological factors that are themed within the data and, as Braun and Clark (2006) suggest, can be an avenue for policy development. This approach
thus proved to be a good fit with critical theory and its focus on giving meaning to and
gaining an understanding of one’s situation as a means of resistance and resolution (Neuman
& Krueger, 2003).

Braun and Clark (2006) indicate that, prior to applying the thematic analysis method,
consideration must be given to the direction of the analysis in order to maintain consistency
throughout the process. The theoretical approach, described by Braun and Clark as deductive
or analytically driven, was most relevant to my research. This approach provides for a
detailed analysis of specific aspects of all the data collected. In my research this included
primary data—the conversations with research participants— and the secondary data—
statistics, artifacts, and journal notes. This method of analysis was well suited to the flushing
out of patterns and themes from the data specific to the experiences of the community of
study and in direct relationship to the research question.

Another significant factor of this type of analysis is identifying what will constitute a
theme, as “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research
question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”
adds that a theme “at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at
maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (p. 4). With this in mind, I determined that
themes would lie in reference to the significant changes that have taken place within the
community. As the data also holds the community’s response to these changes, giving
attention to the patterns in relation to the response allowed for the emergence of themes and
subthemes. Looking at the data from a semantic approach, according to Braun and Clark, will
reveal themes based on their explicit meaning. Using this approach, language noted in the
participant conversations that spoke directly to the research question as well as the overt messages outlined in the statistics and gleaned from artifacts were pulled out as themes and subthemes. The language was in direct relationship to my research question and to the literature reviewed regarding the research topic.

As Aronson (1994), Braun and Clarke (2006), Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) indicate, analysis can begin as data are being collected and can lead to additional questions during the interview process. I began to note patterns during the interviews and clarified these with the participants through paraphrasing and summarizing the conversation. Further queries regarding patterns led the conversations in unexpected directions which resulted in a richer collection of data. Impressions from the conversations as well as patterns captured during transcription were recorded. Interpretation then begged for further exploration, in particular into the coping mechanisms of community members in response to change. This resulted in my request to modify my ethics application to include this additional perspective.

In the process of my analysis, I examined quantitative data as a means to form a baseline understanding of the focus community and its social, cultural, political, and economic location. Gillman (2000) states that the use of “data collected from statistical records over time is a particularly useful way of making sense of and evaluating what you’ve been told, and what documents and other records show” (p. 81). Thus, in melding primary data collected through conversations with the quantitative data, a more comprehensive and organized picture of the community resulted, and as Aronson (1994) indicates, a clearer meaning of the data and emerging patterns was realized. Aronson indicates the importance of coding as a means to ensure that patterns and themes and their meaning are accurately reflected in the analysis. She stresses the importance of reviewing the data numerous times to
ensure that meanings are not lost in interpretation. Data were examined through different formats—transcribing, reviewing, discussion with participants, and reflection in order to “theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 11). The patterns and the themes and sub-themes that evolved were recorded through a coding process that reflected the relationship between the data, the research question, and the literature reviewed (Aronson, 1994; Braun & Clark, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Staniford, Dollard, & Guerin, 2009). The coded themes and subthemes were represented in a table format and similarly on wall charts for a visual of the entire data set. In order to identify the repetition of themes and sub-themes within the data, each transcribed participant conversation was randomly assigned a colour. These colours were noted on the wall charts adjacent to each theme and sub-theme when analysis of the four participant conversations indicated a duplication of information. For example, if a transcript indicated that off-farm income was necessary to support the farm, the corresponding colour assigned to the transcript was marked on the chart. This measurement of repetition provided for substantiation of the primary and secondary data and supported validity.

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) reiterate that review, reflection, and feedback are essential to ensure that coding reflects themes that are clearly representative of the data. This affords corroboration of data and is a means of checking validity and establishing reliability. In order to demonstrate validity and reliability, they stress the importance of verbal feedback from a variety of sources; sources who have a good understanding of the situation. Tremblay (1957) refers to this as “internal consistency” (p. 693). As research participants in qualitative research are typically selected based on their standing in society and their unique
comprehension of the matter at hand, he states their “specialized knowledge” affords an accuracy of information (p. 689). The community participants in this research were what Staniford, Dollard, and Guerin (2009) refer to as “a sample of convenience” (p. 53). They were selected because of their roles as longstanding community members as well as their positions of leadership, and holders of a comprehensive knowledge of their community. The research participants thus represented an ‘internal consistency’ that lent itself as a means of validation. Tremblay also suggests cross-comparison as a means of testing reliability. A cross-comparison of primary data, although differing at times in opinion and perspective, offered an overall consistency throughout the research conversations and was supported by the secondary data.

Stake (2005) also suggests “redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations” are useful tools for validity checking. (p. 454). The procedural challenge he refers to is that of triangulation, which he describes as “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 454). Gillman (2000) refers to the consistency of what is heard, seen, and noted from records as “confirmatory triangulation” (p. 29). Through triangulation, I compared the primary data provided by the research participants from the community, the research participant from the professional community, as well as the information provided in the secondary data and in the literature. Despite the demographic and perceptual diversity of research members, a close relationship was observed between the data provided by each of these sources. This relationship was also present in the secondary data. These parallel representations provided for validation and ensured the reliability of this research.
Validation was also represented through member checking, or what Marshall (1996) refers to as “respondent validation” (p. 94). To ensure the accuracy of my themes and subthemes, discussion took place with the research members during the interviews and in follow-up conversations in order to clarify and confirm interpretations. As the research participants are seen as co-researchers in this study, their contribution to the analysis of data and recognition of themes was paramount in both ensuring accuracy and the collaborative process. It also provided for clarification regarding any discrepant data, as Gillman (2000) states, being cognizant of contradictory data, and searching out this information along with evidence that “qualifies or complicates your emerging understanding, is basic to research integrity” (p. 29). Member checking was also used to recognize and minimize any researcher bias in the development of the themes gleaned from the data. The use of reflection prior to and during discussions, analysis, writing, and editing were used to address such bias.

Although checked for validity and reliability through the above processes, a limitation of this research is the absence of interrater reliability (Staniford, Dollard, & Guerin, 2009). Although validity tools were used and participants were consulted as to interpretation, I was the only person to undertake the overall analysis, thus the option for cross comparison with others was not one that was afforded to this research. The reliability of this research, however, has been established through the clarity that the thematic analysis process provides as well as the range of the validation methods that were applied.

**Strengths and Limitations of the Research Process**

The research process includes reflection on the limitations and strengths that are noted during the course of the study. Although checked for validity and reliability through a number of means, it can be stated that the small sample size in this research is not
representative of the community of study or of other small communities in Saskatchewan and is therefore not generalizable. The selective sampling of participants may also be viewed as a limitation. The demographic of the research participants included longstanding members of the community. Their experiences and perspectives may not be reflective of those of younger or newer members in the community, thus potentially narrowing the range of views presented in this research.

The strength of this research is that of the qualitative research method applied through a community case study. This method allowed for the story of the community to be told through a glimpse into the lives of some of its members as they related their experiences and shared their meanings and feelings as members of a community that has seen significant change. This view of the community offers a context that is rich in its complexity as well as an insight and understanding that is reflective of actual lived experiences. This view is unique to and a strength of qualitative research.

In the next chapter I will outline the findings of the data analysis in regards to the themes and sub-themes that were identified in the primary and secondary data.
Chapter Four: Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter will provide the results of research that was conducted through a case study of community change. A thematic analysis was applied to the primary data sourced from conversations with community members as well as secondary data which included statistical information and artifacts. The data analysis tells two stories: the story from the community perspective, and the story from the perspective of a community mental health professional.

In the analysis, I first looked at the significant changes that were experienced by the community. Research participants indicated that their experiences of change are in direct relationship with changes in government legislation. According to the literature, legislated changes were intended to place governance at the periphery and allow the market to take the lead in the management of agriculture. The data highlights three significant changes to agriculture: Transportation, Collective Marketing and The Landscape.

With an understanding of these changes, I then explored the impacts noted in the data. Through this examination I began to identify patterns that, in relationship to the literature, resulted in the emergence of a number of themes and sub-themes. I have entitled these themes Economic Costs, Socio-Cultural Costs and Political Costs. Patterns within the data also identified characteristics of the community that allowed for it to reconcile these challenges and thus, Resiliency was named as a fourth theme. Secondly, I looked at the impacts to the community from the perspective of a mental health professional. The patterns noted in this portion of the analysis were consistent with that found in the literature and secondary data. The themes that evolved include Stressors, Contingent Behaviours,
Resources and Resiliency. Community characteristics were again apparent in the data and Resiliency completed the listing of themes. A number of sub-themes also emerged from the data with respect to the identified themes and each are discussed below under their corresponding theme heading.

The First Story: Community Perspective

To set the stage for the development of themes and sub-themes, I examined the data for changes that the community has and continues to experience. Although change has been occurring in agriculture since Canada opened its doors to settlement, the three significant changes identified in the data began occurring in Saskatchewan in the late 1970s and continue to impact today’s agriculture. Research participants state that these changes began with government supported policy and programs being legislated out of existence. These changes are consistent with the move in political ideology from that of a Keynesian focused welfare state to one driven by a neo-liberal market-based approach (Brown, 2003). Literature indicates that this ideology was heartily inscribed into the Canadian agricultural landscape with legislation resulting from the Federal government’s 1977 White Paper, *A Food Strategy for Canada* with its forecast of Canada’s future prosperity through “reliance on an efficient market system” (Whalen & Abbott, 1977, p. 16). This same philosophy is also evident in international trade agreements that trumpet the market as the answer to sustainable growth and prosperity. Reliance on the market saw a distancing of government from the affairs of farmers and their propitious leaning toward business interests.

This ideology is seen in the primary data in relation to legislative changes. The first significant change terminated the *Crow’s Nest Pass Act* and its support for the affordable transportation of grain to market through the Crow Rate Agreement. Next on the chopping
block was its successor, the *Western Grain Transportation Act* (WGTA) which provided for subsidized grain transportation. The Federal government saw fit to abolish this legislation using the rationale that Canada needed to play fair in the marketplace and provide a competitive arena for the railways. According to the primary data, the financial impact to farmers as a result of the loss of the Crow Rate and the subsequent WGTA has been colossal. The literature concurs, indicating that the abolishment of the Crow Rate was one of the greatest blows to agriculture, resulting in enormous increases in costs to farmers (National Farmers Union, 2005). Data indicates that this loss not only hit farmers in their pocketbooks, but also that the political maneuvering to satisfy marketplace competition resulted in the closure of small town grain elevators and railway tracks. Research participants indicate that these actions rippled through their community and culminated in the loss of businesses and services and ultimately the population that provided them. Participants stated that as well as driving up costs for transportation and additional infrastructure, the social loss to the community has been monumental. This is confirmed by secondary data and the literature.

The second major event identified in the primary data is the more recent legislating away of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) and the collective marketing of wheat. Primary data shows differing opinions in regards to the loss of this marketing agency. Some participants extolled the benefit of individual farmer control in the open marketing of all grains, while others championed the orderly or collective marketing that was provided by the CWB. Participants did agree that with the termination of the CWB there has been a loss of farmer influence and the market power that it offered. Literature supports the primary data regarding the political contriving to rid agriculture of the CWB which resulted in a forfeiture of the aggregate voice of farmers and their influence on policy making for benefit of
agriculture (Magnan, 2011). One participant speaks of the splintering of the democratic process in respect to the federal government’s disregard for the farmer vote, a legislated requirement for any changes to the CWB Act, as well as the government’s indifference to the judgement of breach by the Canadian Court:

*We’ve had about as much say with the Canadian Wheat Board as we did with the other [Crow Rate] because it never did come to a farmer’s vote. No, they [the government] just decided…that they were going to go ahead because they could. And they had a majority government and that was it.*

The data and literature agree that the collective voice was lost and state that farmers now appear to work in isolation as opposed to cooperation within this new agricultural framework. While the CWB sits on the verge of eradication, participants and the literature indicate that the full social, political and economic impacts have yet to be determined.

The third major change as noted in the data is that of the landscape. This change is also directly tied to a market driven philosophy, ripe with the notion of competition and efficiency. Participants state that the land base of farms has increased exponentially in order for farmers to be competitive in the world marketplace. The literature and personal observation confirms this. A visual of the landscape of the focus community and surrounding area is evident of dramatic change. Where numerous small farms and a thriving rural community once stood, one sees only immense tracts of open farmland and the ragged remnants of this prairie town. The increasing size of farms greatly impacts those who do not have the means to invest in the accumulation of land. According to the data, small family farmers are an anomaly and they struggle economically to manage their farms in the new environment of agriculture. In speaking of the viability of small farms, one participant stated:

*With a couple of sections, a family could not make a living.*
Data indicates that small farms are becoming a thing of the past and the communities that have supported them, too, have withered within the competitive environment of agriculture. When referring to the businesses and services that once flourished in the community, one participant stated:

*All these activities that were in the community now have pretty nearly gone.*

Another participant adds:

*Our town is vastly disappearing...all of a sudden before you know it, it's a ghost town.*

The landscape is also changing due to a divergence in farming and market strategies. As participants indicate, expanses of cultivated land are now being seeded back to grassland. One participant stated, in reference to the Palliser Triangle which encompasses the focus community:

*that was a study in which they said that all this land where we are living to [sic] was not suitable for grain. So what’s happening now...they [buyers] have bought a lot of this land and converted it to hay.*

This movement back to grassland is tied to the economic efficiency of agriculture as evidenced by this participant’s statement:

*Well, we can’t make any money growing crops on it, so let’s put it, seed it down to grass or hay and see how we do. And in lots of cases that’s been a good thing for that farmer and in lots of cases it’s been a good thing for that land, because some of it probably should never have been broken in the first place.*

Farming techniques have similarly altered the landscape. Data indicates that the introduction of technology has resulted in more efficient farming, dire with the massive land base that farms must now hold in order to maintain their competitive stance. This includes
equipment as well as fertilizers and chemicals. One participant speaks to non-till farming as opposed to the traditional fallow farming. Fallow farming is described as planting on a rotational basis to allow the non-seeded land to rest during the growing season. According to the participant, this technique is a means to retain moisture and gain nutrient value from the random growth of wild plants, controlled using tilling equipment. One departure from this technique allows for continuous cropping with plant growth controlled through the use of chemicals and soil nurtured with artificial fertilizers, giving the landscape a very different look. The large diversification in crops has also changed the presentation of the landscape with varieties of grains, cereals and pulse crops that have the technological construction to grow productively in semi-arid land that was traditionally wheat specific.

In sum, the data, supported by the literature, speaks to change in the agricultural landscape as a result of governmental support of a market driven ideology that has slashed transportation and marketing policy. The collectives that have historically allowed for farmer agency in policy making are being crumpled by an individualistic approach well known to neo-liberal ideology. Policies also appear to lean toward a corporate sector that is much better equipped for competition in the marketplace. Literature indicates that attempts to be fiscally responsible and competitive within this disproportionate arrangement have resulted in farmers grappling for land in order to maintain the viability of their operations and their lifestyle (National Farmers Union, 2005). The enormous increase in costs has shaken the economic stability of small family farmers and has seen substantial migration from the community, leaving behind a scant population and a notable absence in the landscape.

The three major areas of change that have been identified include transportation, collective marketing and the landscape. The impacts in response to these changes were
identified as economic costs, socio-cultural costs and political costs. A discussion of these themes and the subthemes that evolved will follow.

**Theme: Economic Costs**

Primary and secondary data and the literature reveal that the increase in the costs of farming has been the most significant challenge to farmers over the past several decades and the greatest source of stress and angst for the farming community (National Farmers Union, 2005; Qualman, 2001; Swanson & Venema, 2006). In exploring the economic costs, four sub-themes emerged from the data: operating costs, equipment and technology costs, the cost of land and transportation costs.

**Sub-theme: Operating inputs and outputs.**

Soaring costs that resulted from legislative changes, as indicated in the data, have had the greatest impact on farmers and have been the most difficult to come to terms with. Participants indicate that the operating costs of farming have impacted all members and all aspects of their community. Costs have grown exponentially since legislated changes began in the 1970’s, and along with declining governmental supports, have changed the way that farmers do business within a market-based philosophy that places the individual farmer in direct competition with one another and on an uneven playing field with corporate agri-business.

These operating costs, participants indicated, are referred to as inputs and outputs. They state that some of the more visible and continually increasing input expenses include fuel for transportation and cropping, patented seed, fertilizer for enhanced crop growth and pesticides and insecticides for weed and insect management. Data from Statistics Canada (2012) indicates that input costs also include items such as forage and irrigation equipment,
livestock feed and veterinarian fees, equipment repairs and farm infrastructure. Data indicates that inputs must be accessed from the small number of corporations that control these inputs and their associated costs. Patented seed must be purchased on an annual basis and the entire crop must be sold back to the corporation holding the patent. This seed typically comes with chemical and fertilizer requirements that must also be purchased, from the same corporation, for successful growth, adding further to the costs. This does not allow for traditional seed saving and drives up the input costs for this annual purchase. Participants state that fuel costs are also dependent on a world market that sees substantial increases and few decreases. Output costs identified in the data are comprised of taxes and debt, wages, crop and hail insurance and cash rent. Participants point out that wages paid for hired help are becoming more prevalent regardless of the innovations in technology and equipment that sees massive machinery doing the job of many.

The literature concurs with the data and raises concern over increases in operating costs and the impact on the financial stability of farmers and the viability of communities. As the control of inputs now lie in the hands of just a few transnational corporations such as Monsanto, Cargill, and Du Pont, this limited competition allows them, with their market power, jurisdiction over the price setting of products that farmers must rely on for their livelihood (Qualman, 2001). With the absence of corporate competition farmers end up paying increased costs in favour of corporate profit margins. In speaking of the role of the corporations in the farming operation, one participant indicated:

If you want to grow a certain Canola you have to buy the seed from them, you’ve got to buy the spray from them and then, you know, they’re telling you where you’re going to haul it at the end of the year...they want to control us from, right from the beginning. And now, even some of them are getting into the fuel business. So they
have their fingers in that pie too so that they own the fuel, they own the seed, they own the fertilizer, they own the chemical.

Data, examined from Statistics Canada (2012) for the years 2007 to 2011, regarding farm operating expenses, reflected the increasing costs and their far reaching impacts on farmers. Statistics indicate that all areas of the farming operation have increased substantially with the exception of interest rates and heating fuel. Adding to the financial pressures already experienced by farmers, rebates and stabilization payments were noted to have decreased. The primary and secondary data are consistent in the claims regarding costs, however are in conflict regarding interest rates. The participants stated that this output cost was increasing while statistics indicated otherwise. Variability in the data was taken into consideration based on the time frame of available statistical data ending in 2011 and the collection of primary data in 2012-2013.

While operating expenses and debt have risen substantially during this period, farm net operating income has either remained static or has dropped, according to Statistics Canada (2012). Data also reveals that average income of farm families from the years 2005 to 2009 has increased; however, it is noted that the bulk of this income is earned from off-farm employment which has steadily increased during this same period (Statistics Canada, 2011). Research participants state that, without this supplementary income, small farmers struggle to manage the significant increases in operating costs and the paralleling expenses incurred to access them. As services leave their community, travel is necessary to attain needed items or services from distant locations.

Literature states that, while small farmers struggle to compete in the market system, corporations, more secure in their financial base and marketing power are seeing economic gain (National Farmers Union, 2005). Thus, participants indicate that farmers are second
guessing their roles within this new agriculture as they attempt to juggle the increase in farming costs with an income that is not seeing the same growth. Small farmers are at the mercy of corporations and have no collective voice within this new individualistic milieu in which to challenge for change. Participants stated that the economic situation results in many farmers leaving the farm to seek work in other sectors as their farms are not able to provide a viable income.

*Sub-theme: Technology and equipment.*

The primary data states that the costs of technology and equipment reflect the movement from traditional to technological farming practices. While the cost of technology is seen as a financial burden, the cost of ignoring it is also dire. One research participant indicated:

*In order to feed the world’s population that [sic] we definitely have to get the most out of this land…the technology and the equipment has allowed the production to increase dramatically.*

Data indicates that with farms expanding, equipment must be correspondingly larger and more technologically advanced in order to manage the production of these operations. The benefits are summed up by this participant:

*We are gaining something new in the technology. The equipment and the technology on today’s farms has changed dramatically over the last ten or fifteen years and it is probably going to continue to change. And I think that’s certainly a benefit. And the reason that it’s a benefit is that new technology and the new equipment and the new way of farming has probably increased production on this farm…by fifty or sixty percent.*

With the technological advances, however, come dramatically increased prices, as stated:
In 1980, you could have bought a brand new combine; I know you could have bought one for seventy-five thousand. That same combine today will cost you close to half a million dollars.

Along with the need for this machinery, more substantive vehicles are required for transporting grain to market. Participants indicated that with the closing of the railway lines into the small communities, and the subsequent closing of the local grain elevators, the need to haul grain greater distances to the inland terminals cannot be undertaken without the use of larger vehicles. As one participant stated:

*We used to be able to haul our grain four or five miles to town. Now we’re looking at hauling it, well, for us right now, right in this area, we’re looking at thirty-five miles, and that’s the closest...and of course if you’re going to start hauling grain that far, you can’t haul that with a three ton truck anymore.*

Participants indicated that technologically driven equipment aids in precision farming and the increased mechanisms for time efficiency and safety to farm the considerable tracts of land is critical. This same technology, however, requires knowledge and skill which limits the operation of this machinery to those with the training and proficiency to do so.

While the data indicated the increasing costs of farm operations, including that of machinery maintenance expenses, the secondary data did not indicate the expenses associated with capital investments. The literature, however, makes reference to the resources needed for larger and more technologically driven equipment to meet the needs of huge farming operations. Operating costs and major expenditures are a factor in smaller farmers feeling the financial squeeze of increased debt as they attempt to compete with big scale operations. One participant indicates, if you are not able to compete in this new business of farming, you are
“going to be forced out” of agriculture. Indeed, Statistics Canada (2011) indicates that the number of farm families has steadily decreased in the period from 2005 to 2009.

**Subtheme: Land purchases and cash rental.**

The onus on land acquisition is noted in the primary data as a means to be competitive in the global marketplace. To be big is to be competitive, and as one participant states:

*You’ve got to be big. I’ve come to that conclusion.*

Another stressed that:

*The size really is important...you’ve got to have a lot of acres if you want to have any sort of lifestyle at all.*

The primary data indicated a significant increase in land prices as well as a divergence from those who are the typical purchasers. Land ownership has characteristically been passed from one generation to the next, or from neighbour to neighbour. Today purchasers may include local farmers with the financial stability of “old money,” however, participants express that land ownership is now increasingly falling into the hands of corporations, interprovincial or foreign investors. This opening up to investment is noted in the *Food Strategy for Canada* (Whalen & Abbott, 1977) and is touted within the ideological premise of neo-liberalism as being at the fore of Canada’s prosperity. It is also evident in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which extols investment opportunities as a means to enhance “economic growth and rising standards of living” (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2013, webpage). Participants indicate that land investment is driving up prices and disrupting the opportunities for local farmers seeking to expand their land base. The literature indicates that this interest in the land has increased prices as much as
or more than three times its estimated value and has resulted in great difficulty for local farmers to begin a career in farming, or expand an existing one. According to one participant:

*Well, it’s really tough for a young person to enter the farm industry without support from family, or something of that nature. It’s close to an impossibility.*

The literature indicates that exploding land prices are part and parcel of the overall economic hardship that small farmers are experiencing. Farmers are not able to compete with the corporations or even their large landowner neighbours whose cash flow availability affords them the purchasing power to expand (Broadway, 2006; Magnan, 2011; National Farmers Union, 2005). Participants indicated that those who cannot afford the land are leaving the community for educational pursuits or to seek the security of alternate employment. Literature supports this trend of depopulation and the economic and social implications to communities.

Primary data suggests that another opportunity for farm expansion is that of land rental. Alternately, farmers needing to sell land to maintain financial stability may have the option of renting the land back to farm for a period of time. One participant indicated that this can be seen as *the best of both worlds* with the financial benefit of selling land at inflated prices then renting it as a means to continue in the farming business. This is not without concessions. Participants state that there have typically been two ways to rent land; profit sharing and cash rental. While profit sharing is arranged on a percentage basis where the landowner and farmers each receive a share of the crop, cash rental is a set amount of money paid to the landowner. Cash rental is preferred by the landholders as it results in a guaranteed income. This arrangement, however, places the risks solely with the farmer who is responsible for all expenses plus the rental payment, regardless of a successful harvest. Statistics Canada (2012) indicates that cash rental prices have risen substantially. Thus, along
with the risk, increasing costs to rent land places another financial burden on small or new farmers with limited financial manoeuvrability.

Participants indicate that many of the corporate, foreign or interprovincial investors do not make the community their home, thus the dollars they earn from the farm do not remain in the community and enhance its economic stability and viability. It is also noted that the absence of these owners has stretched the population thin, both geographically and socially. Thus, external investment and local migration leave a sparse population holding together the shreds of a small town, resulting in a thinning social fabric so important in the making of community.

**Sub-theme: Transportation.**

Participants refer to the changes in transportation as having far reaching impacts on farmers and their community at large. Transportation has resulted in the financial instability of small farmers, beginning with the loss of subsidized grain shipping through legislated changes. In speaking of the abolishment of the *Crow’s Nest Pass Act*, one research participant indicated:

> With the Crow Rate that was in place, it was beneficial for farmers, I’m thinking, but not maybe so for the railroad companies.

With the elimination of the Crow Rate and farmers paying all grain shipping costs, the railways would be relieved of some of their operating expenses. The literature supports the primary data, stating that a focus on rail company profits was supported by governmental patronage to a market economy with the view that farmers should be responsible for paying full costs for shipping (National Farmers Union, 2005; Swanson & Venema, 2006). One participant stated that shipping costs jumped approximately six times the amounts that were levied when the Crow Rate was in effect, while another added:
Well, the Crow Rate certainly had an effect upon us... when the Crow Rate went, that resulted in the freight rates jumping... from twenty four and a half cents, I believe, to about a dollar and twenty five cents, right off the bat.

The literature states that rate increases five to six times those of the subsidized rates occurred in the aftermath of the Crow Rate. Although farmers received Crow Rate Benefits - payments to offset the initial costs needed to address alternate shipping - transportation costs would severely impact the financial stability of farmers (Swanson & Venema, 2006). Participants indicated that with the end of transportation subsidies a chain reaction of loss rippled through their community as rail lines were no longer operational and grain elevators closed. They state:

As soon as the Crow was gone, the tracks were gone.

And:

The Crow Rate certainly had an effect upon us... all of a sudden the rail lines disappeared, the elevators disappeared.

Farmers were faced with the increased expense of shipping grain to larger centres by truck. In addition, this participant suggests that rail companies were instrumental in:

Getting the grain onto the municipal roads and onto the provincial highways and put the burden of that [cost] on somebody else.

Literature states that this would enhance the bottom line of the railways while the local and provincial governments would pick up the costs for road maintenance due to increased traffic. These costs would eventually fall to the farmers through municipal taxes (National Farmers Union, 2005). This translated into increased costs for trucking grain to larger centres, additional grain storage infrastructure on farms, and for shipping grain by rail
to export markets. While the termination of the Crow Rate has detrimental impacts, one participant indicated the benefit of more efficient rail service and larger capacity elevators.

The primary data indicated that with the closure of rail lines and elevators and the need to transport grain to terminals in larger centres, farmers were in a position to access shops and services in these centres and found that more options and competitive prices were available. Thus, the small businesses in the community could not compete with the larger centres and closed their doors. Community services such as the schools, churches and recreational facilities followed suit and an exodus of the population resulted that hit the community hard. The National Farmers Union (2005) and Swanson and Venema (2006) speak to the impacts of depopulation on farmers and their communities. In the wake of migration, farmers were left with fewer local services and supports and the increased cost of seeking these out in more distant communities. Participants point out the necessity of travel for most needs including those of the farm and home as well as for recreation and personal matters. The financial costs add up when a trip for services is an all-day affair instead of a quick trip to the local community.

Participants expressed that travel is also becoming more prevalent with on-farm work due to larger expanses of farmland as well as for the off-farm work necessary to support the farming operation. This increase in travel adds to financial expenses as well as to costs of time and safety. These factors were will be discussed under the following theme regarding socio-cultural costs.

**Theme: Socio-Cultural Impacts**

The federal government’s White Paper indicated that a market economy would be instrumental in Canada’s future potential and in the realization of Canadians’ social goals
(Whalen & Abbott, 1977). The data and other literature reviewed, however, tend to contradict this statement with the indications of social and cultural losses experienced by communities. The sub-themes that evolved from the data suggest that the socio-cultural costs include role changes, off-farm work, costs of time, and lifestyle changes.

**Sub-theme: Role change.**

According to the data, the traditional roles of the female in the farming family have been that of the caretaker of the home, the children and the farmer. The changes to the business of farming, however, have seen the female role change significantly. Data and literature indicate that women have moved beyond the kitchen and into the field to provide the needed help with farming as a result of distanced and fewer extended family members on the farm. Women have also taken on a role in the management of the operations, traditionally the domain of farm men (Brannen et al., 2009; Fraser et al., 2005). Child rearing and household management continue to remain predominately in the domain of farm women, with their more active participation in farm activities compounding their workload. Fraser et al. and Brannen et al. refer to the new role of farm women as that of taking on a triple shift, necessary to encompass their expanded duties.

The roles of extended family have also changed due to the financial restraints of farms that cannot support them. This leaves an absence of extended family available for the needed help with child care and support in the farm work. Data and literature indicate that extended family are more geographically distanced as younger members leave for educational pursuits or attractive employment opportunities and older family members retire to larger centres were supports and services are more readily available.
Data shows a departure of farmers from their traditional role in decision making within the farming operation. This role now appears to be in the hands of the marketplace and the corporations. One participant comments about decision making in regards to what farmers grow and what techniques are used:

*The market is handling that and…you can say to some degree that the corporations are manipulating the market. So indirectly, I guess, they certainly have an influence on what we do on the farm.*

The average of age of farmers is increasing, as indicated in the data and the literature. Aging farmers continue to farm, stated one participant, due to a fear of losing an intergenerational farm and a strong desire to keep the land in the family. With soaring costs of land, machinery and the operational expenses of farming, younger family members are finding it beyond their means to take over the family farm. It was suggested that aging farmers remain on the farm as a means to assist younger family members carry on the farming venture. This trend bestows the importance of sustaining community as a means of support for this diversity of farmers. The older population are also seen as a link in maintaining a connectedness within the social community and are a source of modeling the fundamental concept of community to younger members. One participant stated:

*We sort of look after one another…we do that with all our neighbours. They do that for us.*

With the continued role of older farmers on the farm and in the community, costs are addressed in a number of ways. This is a means to manage the costs of labour in the farming operation. The cost of farm operation management, as well as community management is provided in the wisdom that older farmers bring to the table. It also defers the financial
expense of relocation for older farmers to larger centres where appropriate and affordable housing is currently inflated by the vibrancy of the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan.

**Sub-theme: Off-farm work.**

The data indicated the need for off-farm work for both farm women and men as a means to supplement the farm income. Secondary data available from Statistics Canada (2011) for the years 2005 to 2009 regarding off-farm income was examined. Statistics show that off-farm income has risen steadily during this time period and makes up the bulk of the total farm income for families with annual operating revenues under $100,000.00. For families with operating revenues over $100,000.00, the off-farm income was comparable to the farm income. Primary data indicated larger farming operations were more viable in the competitive marketplace than smaller operations and therefore have less need for off-farm income. For smaller farmers, however participants state of off-farm income:

*That kept a lot of the farmers afloat.*

And:

*To supplement their income often times...there’s one or two people, the mom and/or the dad that have got an off-farm job.*

This participant adds that if not for off-farm work:

*I wouldn’t have the farm.*

The data, supported by the literature, states an increase in stress for farm families due to the additional responsibility of off-farm employment. This necessitates a balance between the need for supplemental income and that of meeting the responsibilities of the farm. The need for off-farm work places the farmer in a position of doing *double duty*, as one participant stated. Fraser et al. (2005) and Brannen et al. (2009) stated that the female farmer,
as indicated earlier in this discussion, may be required to take on a triple shift in her juggling of farm work, off-farm work and household and childcare roles. Literature also states that the male farmer is characteristically socialized as the provider for the family and may feel an usurping of his traditional role when the female farmer is required to take on a more active role in both farm and off-farm work, adding more angst to an already stressful situation (Fraser et al., 2005).

Noted in the literature, however absent from the data, is the reference to divided loyalties regarding off-farm work. Fraser et al. (2005) speak of a conflict, especially for farm women, who are trying to manage farm work, off-farm work and the role of caregiver. Supplemental employment provides a source of secure income for the farm; however, the farm can be seen as a drain on the earned income. Data indicates that loyalties can be stretched when the responsibility to an off-farm employer is challenged during peak farming periods.

Primary data indicates that off-farm employment requires transportation, fuel and vehicle maintenance costs which add to the financial burden faced by farmers. Childcare may be a requirement, further compounding the costs. Impacts to younger children requiring childcare are noted as well as the added responsibilities placed on older children as caregivers to the younger ones. There is, however, an absence in the literature regarding the impacts to children.

Safety is noted in the data due to increased travel and long hours spent for work and for travel to and from the place of employment. Fatigue, as well as weather and road conditions, can be a factor in safety. The physical hazards, combined with the stress experienced by farmers, is taken up in the literature in regard to farming as one of the most
dangerous of industries (Gregoire, 2002; Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). Sturgeon and Morrissette note, along with Brannen et al. (2009) that, the operation of machinery, often in isolation, chemical hazards and fatigue from long working hours play a significant role in farm safety. One participant noted concerns regarding the safety of chemical farming:

*But it’s not supposed to be that harmful. But that again...well, it depends on who you are talking to.*

**Sub-theme: The cost of time.**

The cost of time is noted in the primary data and supported in the literature. Time is of the essence in the business of farming and with the expansive farms that are seen today, its role becomes even more important. Participants indicate that time is a factor in seeding, spraying, and harvesting activities as the farmer must be prepared to work when the crops are at certain stages in their growth, as well as within the constraints of weather. With the more sizable farms, an intricate balance of time is required for the farm work and for the travel to get to the many land locations within the farm boundary. A mixed farming operation throws the care of livestock and forage preparation into the mix and can further stretch the parameters of time. The onus is placed on the farmers to manage the duties of the farming operation when they are required. As one participant expressed:

*There’s time around here, and not just in harvest or seeding time, but there are times around here when...there’s somebody wanting to bring you a load of fertilizer or two or three at the same time and down the road ten miles we’re supposed to be loading up lentils onto a truck for market.*

Primary data indicates that for families where one or both farmers are working a double or triple shift, time becomes a significant factor in the management of household duties, childcare, yard work, and farm and off-farm work. In these situations time is spread
ever more thinly in meeting responsibilities. Time is factored into travel for off-farm employment as well as for childcare arrangements. It also plays a role in accessing supplies for the farm operation as well as for personal needs with services and supports distanced in the larger centres. Fraser et al. (2005) and Gregoire (2002) both indicate that the extensive workloads for farmers places the burden of their required work in a balance with the time needed to see it to completion.

Sub-theme: Lifestyle.

The participants in this research indicate that the farming lifestyle has been impacted by the significant changes in agriculture. Farming is no longer viewed as a lifestyle, but is seen as a business. One participant puts it this way:

*It’s not fun anymore. It used to be fun to get out on the tractor and get your crop in and watch it grow…[farmers] don’t consider it fun anymore. It’s more of a job.*

Participants state that the competitive nature of farming has saturated the farming experience and has integrated into the farming lifestyle. They indicate a feeling of isolation within their community as neighbours are distanced and attend to their farm, home, and recreational needs on a more individualistic basis, as opposed to the collective nature that once flourished in the traditional farming community. One participant states:

*Farm families seem to be pretty busy and the interaction amongst neighbours has become less and less over the years.*

This decrease in interaction speaks to the greater absence of extended family within the community, the geographical distance between neighbours and, according to participants, absentee landowners. Participants indicate that depopulation has resulted in the loss of services and activities in the community, and has played a role in a greater reliance on individualistic behaviours. One participant indicates:
There’s no activity in the community hall anymore, the church is gone, the curling rink isn’t used as much as it should be, so there’s less social contact amongst rural residents now as compared to just a few years ago.

Community members tend to take their relationships on the road with them as they are attending to business, personal matters, and recreation in larger centres. Brannen et al. (2009) concur with the lifestyle changes evident in rural communities due to a population loss, that results in the depletion of social infrastructure and, ultimately, social connections.

Social media is also noted in the primary data as playing a huge role in the individualistic behaviours of the community. Several participants stated that farm business can be conducted through electronic marketing, including the buying and selling of grain and livestock, equipment, and farm supplies. A participant noted:

*Even auction sales, farmers are bidding at auctions online and things like that.*

This medium also expands into electronic relationships and can be a source of both formal and informal support in addressing farmer needs. There are a number of benefits to farmers, according to participants. When resources are not easily accessed due to distance, there are savings in time and travel when business can be conducted from the kitchen table. One participant indicates a loss of cultural and social connections in the community, but, however, champions social media:

*Yes, we are losing some of that [social connections]. But at the same token...we’re able to broaden our horizons much more easily now via the internet and other media, so you know, you’re losing on the one end but gaining a little possibly on the other end.*

While the advantages are evident, social media appears to promote a greater individualization and social isolation within the community. Literature support was lacking
in regards to the benefit or the detrimental role that social media may play within the farming community.

Participants indicate that a feature of the new lifestyle of farming is the need for material possessions, regardless of the cost in relation to farm income. As one participant indicated:

*It doesn’t matter whether you can go way into debt, or anything else...where I would have been worried myself sick, they don’t think anything of it. It just seems to be a way of life, you know, you can use your plastic and away you go.*

Another participant stated:

*There’s been a few now...spent too much money and should have been on easy street but are starting to fall back. You know, because the tree didn’t stay green for very long...I don’t know whether they thought the money was running out of their pockets and was never going to stop...it was easy come, easy go.*

This participant summed up lifestyle change as:

*Social expectations are different now...they work hard but they also play hard, too. So, it’s all about the campers and the boats and the fun weekends away and flying to Vegas and things like that.*

Participants could not provide an understanding of this new perspective on spending and, as longstanding members of their community and coming from an era where thrift was a necessity, the reaction to this lifestyle change was bewildering. The literature was limited in regard to this new trend in spending.

**Theme: Political Factors**

The primary data and the literature make reference to a transformation in the political landscape with the market management of agriculture. Research participants indicated that
this political disruption has greatly impacted their livelihoods and lifestyles. The two sub-themes are evolved from the data include Farmer versus Corporation and Resistance.

Sub-theme: Farmer versus corporation.

Data indicates that political orchestration led to legislative changes that saw the end of government support for the costs of grain transportation with the Crow Rate, as well as collective marketing, and a greater farmer voice in the marketplace with the approaching finale of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). Participants state that this focus has greatly impacted farmers from an economic standpoint, one that has become unbearable for some farmers. The literature speaks to the movement of political ideology in favour of marketplace management of agriculture, and concurs that legislated changes have resulted in significant impacts (Magnan, 2011; National Farmers Union, 2005; Qualman, 2001; Swanson & Venema, 2006). While the impacts are tangibly evident, participants also state that, within the great scheme of the market, their voices have also been silenced. One participant indicated of policy changes to agriculture:

*It doesn’t really matter to them [the government].*

Another stated:

*With the diminishing number of people employed or in the agricultural industry in Western Canada, not too many governments are going to chase too few votes.*

The data and literature remark on the change to the political landscape as a result of marketplace ideology and to the alternation of the democratic process in reference to the unheeded legislation of the CWB Act and the judgement of the Court on the necessity of a farmer response regarding any change to the Act (Magnan, 2011). Further to the loss of voice, participants indicated that the focus on individualism and competition has frayed the
collective stances that have been an important part in the structure of agriculture. They state that a departure from cooperative decision making appears to have slipped through the hands of farmers and is now firmly in those of corporate enterprise, supported by government legislation. Participants, note, however, that farmers are taking steps in resistance to policy changes as noted below.

**Sub-theme: Farmer resistance.**

Acts of resistance were noted in the primary data. One participant spoke of the closure of the rail line and local elevator in the community and the impact to farmers regarding alternate transportation and its associated costs for grain shipping. In the spirit of historical farmer movements, community members gathered in a collective to initiate what the participant referred to as a *short line railway*. The participant described this undertaking:

*A bunch of farmers got together and bought the rail...they put in a side track so that the train could drop cars off there and farmers could...haul their grain there and load it.*

*We [farmers] can load what are called producer cars.*

This participant indicated that the government is supporting this private endeavour and is insisting that the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) pick up the producer cars and take them to the shipping ports. Other acts of resistance were described as a gathering of community members to lobby for the continued operation of the community’s school when the provincial government planned its closure. The community saw the need for its continued operation based on the population of children in the community, and touted the school’s successful fiscal management in countering the government’s statement that the costs to maintain the school were prohibitive. Although unsuccessful in their challenge to the government regarding the school, the same community members gathered in regard to the
closing of the community’s post office. With a petition in hand and the willingness to compromise in hours, the community was able to maintain this amenity. The participant stated:

*I think if we wouldn't have got together, we would have lost it.*

The grain elevator remains open in the community, and although it is privately owned, it continues to provide seed cleaning and grain storage. The literature also indicates the resistant endeavours of farmers through organizations, such as the NFU, and its goals and actions for “agricultural policies which will ensure dignity and security of income for farm families while enhancing the land for future generations” (National Farmers Union, 2005, webpage). The community’s stance demonstrates that resistance to government policy can be successful through cooperation and collective lobbying to maintain a social inclusiveness and a sense of community.

**Theme: Resiliency**

As part of the data gathering, research participants were asked if they would share their fondest memories of their community. Along with laughter and some melancholy in remembering their earlier years, there was an overarching sense of pride as participants told this part of their story. The stories portrayed a historical complexity in terms of the survival, stamina, and spirit of a diverse group of people working together to support a lifestyle unique to the farming community.

A significant theme noted in the stories was that of resiliency. One participant equated resiliency with the values of the community. This was echoed by other participants, who stated that community values were the means by which they have been able to retain a sense of community and some of their traditional rural lifestyle in light of changes and
impacts experienced. Characteristics such as these were noted in the data and the sub-themes that merged include a Sense of Community and Strengths.

**Sub-theme: Sense of community.**

The primary data indicates that a sense of community is being maintained despite the depopulation that has occurred in the focus community. Research participants stated that community members desire a social connection and indicate that inclusiveness, a significant part of community, is maintained to a point, within the community. A highlighted factor was:

*A lack of population. That’s the biggest barrier. Because as far as I’m concerned, if we had more people, there would be more things [happening].*

This participant indicated that the population barrier is compounded by the community demographic:

*It’s retired people. And I’m not saying that they don’t add anything to your community. But it’s not that group of people that, you know, get things rolling…they most definitely support you…there’s no problem there.*

Data indicated that, regardless of the limited population, there is an intrinsic need for connectedness with one another in the community. This is instrumental in community spirit and is evidenced, according to participants, through the respect and enthusiasm that younger members show in learning tried and true methods of the older members, and the willingness shown by the older folks in welcoming the technological knowledge and energy of the young people. This melding of respect and cooperation is seen in their work and in their play. Participants stated that younger community members have strived to initiate activities that nurture a connectedness, while being guided by the older members. Participants, however, reiterate the dire need for younger people in the community to take on the leadership role.
One participant stated of the hope that it brings to the longstanding members of the community:

*All these [activities] take time and like I say, a few more young people. Like I’d be really happy about all this land changes [sic] taking place, if this is young families moving into the community... the stars would be shining again, I think.*

The sense of community is indicated in the data regarding generosity and trust as neighbours watch out for one another. This expands to encompass a sense of security within the community, with doors left open when a family is away on the off chance that a neighbour will be stranded and need something. This security is parallel. Community members feel secure in leaving their homes open while their neighbours are secure in the fact that should they need help, it is available to them. This traditional stance of neighbours helping neighbours continues in the community today, regardless that they are more distanced from one another. One participant stated:

*They're fewer and further between, but they’re all good neighbours.*

Another added that the mutual support of neighbours nurtures the cohesiveness of the community and is important for practical as well as social needs. This participant tells of support in times of need, such as offering help in the field:

*They’ve been here and I’ve been there.*

Brannen et al. (2009) add communication, leadership, and intercommunity relationships as characteristics that result in resiliency. Participants stated that communication within each generation and between the generations in the community has resulted in the sharing of ideas and experiences and has contributed to the success of activities in their community. One participant indicated that, while some activities have been
less attended than others, the success has been in the spirit of cooperation and the desire for community connections.

**Sub-theme: Strengths.**

The strengths of the community are indicated by participants in regard to the united spirit that is presented when solutions to hardships are needed, such as the purchase of the rail line by a group of farmers in order to address transportation issues. These strengths were expressed, as well, in regard to the collective support of community members to maintain community services. The strengths of the community are said to include creativity and strong will, evidenced in the lobbying for services, as well as in organizing of community activities. Community members have rallied to coordinate activities and have exhibited resourcefulness in addressing the spectrum of needs of the population, such as travel, child care, and time availability, and in appealing to the abilities and interest of a diverse age group. Research participants stated that activities may be as simple as a ball tournament, but they are inclusive and involve all community members, whether they coach or play the game, organize parking, cook hamburgers, or cheer from the sidelines. The creative strength within the community saw the development of an idea that resulted in the preservation of a functional community building doomed to demolition. That building now houses a business and offers a gathering place in the community. This creativity, participants add, is linked to the adaptability and the perseverance of the community in addressing the changes that have been experienced. One participant indicated that in response to the changes:

*Well, I think most people are coping remarkably well with these changes, particularly the younger generation that have only been farming full time for five or ten or 15 years. They certainly, most of them, grasp these new opportunities and changes. You know, their attitude is that change is good.*
Participants indicate that this positive attitude, along with a sense of hope, fuels the resilient spirit of the community. They state that the hope and the strength of community lend support to community members as they navigate through the difficult times of corporate agriculture. Noted also is the tenacity of farm families that results in a “getting up and dusting off” attitude as they work double and triple shifts as necessary to maintain their farms or to assume new ventures that may treat them a little less harshly. The determination and work ethic of farmers supports their farming ventures or the transferability of their skills to new endeavours off the farm. Participants volunteered regarding employability skills:

*If you want to hire someone, hire a farm boy or a farm girl because they know how to work.*

And:

*It's a well-known fact that anyone in the oil business will readily admit that if somebody from Saskatchewan who is able bodied and looking for a job, that’s the person that you want to hire because they seem to have that work ethic and that go-for-it sort of attitude.*

Resiliency is noted in the data in regards to the sense of achievement and appreciation for the community’s accomplishments over the years. There was a sense of pride indicated in the vibrancy of the community during these times and a sense of hope that the community can regain some of its potential amidst the great change it is now experiencing. Participants indicated that the satisfaction in the accomplishments of their community flames a hope of more as younger members collaborate to ensure community connectedness. There was an evident sense of honour noted, as well, when this research project presented the opportunity for participants to tell the story of their community. Also of note is a sense of humour, viewed by participants as a means to consider the lighter side of the circumstances in which
they find themselves, and to provide a state of mind that allows for gratitude for what is 
given and what can be gained from their trials. The characteristics of resiliency suggest that a 
sense of community remains strong in this small rural Saskatchewan town.

**The Second Story: Mental Health Perspective**

The story from a mental health perspective echoed the changes and impacts to the 
farming community that were indicated by community participants. The mental health 
participant summed up the impacts which resulted due to the changes in agriculture:

> Now it’s thousands of acres and huge equipment and huge financial stressors. And 
> the wife actually helping to operate the machinery…she’s not much of homemaker 
> during farming season…the hours of work are long and the seasons are short so it’s 
> about getting as much done in the day as you possibly can. So lack of sleep. Social 
> expectations are different now…they work hard but they also play very hard, 
> too…some of the people…approaching their 60s [are] struggling to learn the 
> technology and the equipment and things like that. And there’s also having a shortage 
> of help is a big stressor as well. And…definitely the weather is a big stressor, too.

Evolving from the impact of corporate agriculture, stated this participant, are the 
stressors that are causing such a struggle for farmers. Thus, **Stressors** became the first theme 
to be pulled from the data. **Contingent Behaviours** and **Resources** emerged and evidence of 
**Resiliency** noted in the data will round out the themes in this section of the data analysis.

**Theme: Stressors**

Within the theme identified as stressors, a number of factors contributing to the stress 
of farms were identified in the data. These include **Financial Stressors**, **Role Changes**, **Safety**, 
and **Weather**. These sub-themes were supported by the secondary data and the literature.
Sub-theme: Financial.

The participant stated that the most prevalent and most devastating stressor is the financial instability which takes farmers down a path where their land, their livelihood, and their lifestyle hang in the balance. This was the dominant theme as evidenced in the data gathered from community members, as well as the secondary data which included information from Statistics Canada. Financial instability is supported in the literature and deemed the greatest source for stress in the farming community (Fraser et al., 2005; Brannen et al., 2009; Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010).

This participant indicated:

*Definitely financial stress…unfortunately there’s a lot out there who just can’t keep up financially and, you know, are losing their farms because of financial difficulties.*

The source of financial stress is related to the increases in the operational costs of farming, including unexpected costs for events, such as equipment breakdowns and for major purchases such as machinery. The data indicated that cost for farm labour is compounded by the pressure to find and secure suitable help. Stressors also included the significant increases in land prices and high debt loads that burden farmers. Along with burgeoning costs of farming, the participant indicated a lack of financial management skills, resulting in great anxiety for farmers amidst such fiscal pressure.

Sub-theme: Role changes.

Data identified changes and expanded the roles within farm families. These roles include the need for off-farm work—a significant stressor within families and potentially maintained by both partners as a means to support the farm. The participant indicated that the role of women was moving beyond the traditional boundaries of the home and expanding into the physical exercise of farm work, as well as into off-farm employment. This role
results in multiple burdens for parents with the pressure of doing farm work amidst household management and child rearing, finding, and maintaining appropriate off-farm employment, accessing available and appropriate child care, and transporting children to and from this care, as part of the working day. Incurred costs for travel and child care financially complicates an already stressful experience. Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) identify the incredible stress for farmers in their juggling of on- and off-farm employment, long working hours, and what they refer to as role overload.

The change in roles of extended family, with many leaving a farm that cannot support them, sees grandparents or other family members distanced and unavailable for assistance in farm work or childcare. This may necessitate older children in the family taking on this responsibility, thus placing additional strain on all members of the household. Further to this, the responsibility of doing what the participant referred to as double duty—on- and off-farm work—or the triple shift, noted previously by Fraser et al. (2005) and Brannen et al. (2009), that stretches farmers between farm work, off-farm employment and the daily organization and maintenance of the family, compounds the pressure to be successful in these endeavours and increases stress substantially. A stressful family situation is amplified, according to the participant, during the peak seasons when planting and harvesting take place. The family takes low priority during these periods of intense farm work when time is at a premium and the financial outcomes for the farm are contingent on getting this work completed. These extended roles and responsibilities add immense pressure to the family situation and can result in conflict and the fragmenting of families.
**Sub-theme: Safety.**

Safety also comes into play in regard to travel for farm and off-farm work. With larger farms stretching into numerous sections and locations, and off-farm work, typically in the larger centres, the safety of travel comes into play. The distance and time for travel, as well as increased road traffic, complete with its large grain hauling vehicles and farm equipment, furthers the strain. The participant stated that the combination of extended hours to accomplish the duties of both roles and road and weather conditions not always favourable in Saskatchewan magnify the experience of stress. Fatigue is noted as a prevalent factor in the safety of farmers and ultimately adds another stressor into the equation. Literature revealed little information in respect to increased transportation and fatigue as a safety concern for farmers. Gregoire (2002) and Fraser et al. (2005), however, indicate increased workloads are significant factors for stress and anxiety and point out physical health impacts in regard to farm-related injuries. Statistics Canada (2012) outlines a number of trends in regard to illness as well. Literature did not address safety in relation to travel and time requirements and leaves a path for future study in the area of stress and safety within the realm of farming.

**Sub-theme: Weather.**

In addition to its role in travel, weather was identified in the data, as an uncontrollable nemesis and one of the greatest sources on anxiety for farmers. Its unpredictability—rain or a lack of it, hail, wind, floods, and early frosts—all play a role in the levels of stress experienced when farm livelihoods are dependent on good weather for good crops. Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) indicate that weather is one of the top stressors in the farming population. Brannen et al. (2009), Fraser et al. (2005), and Gregoire (2002) concur. The
volatility of weather parallels the precariousness found in the financial market and serves as a double blow to the mental wellness of farmers.

The participant indicated that stressors manifest into behaviours in attempts by farmers to alleviate the stress that they are experiencing. The actions include effective means that can help to mitigate the situation; however, ineffective actions also take place and exacerbate the stress that farmers are feeling as they address the consequences of their behaviours.

The following theme was developed in response to the ineffective behaviours that were identified in the primary and secondary data.

**Theme: Contingent Behaviours**

The data indicated that stress can translate into unhealthy means of coping. Literature lists a number of ineffective coping actions as a result of intense stress, and includes information from Statistics Canada (2012) that indicates health trends over a period from 2003 to 2011. This time frame reflects a decrease in the overall health of Saskatchewan residents and the perception of fair to poor health within both the physical and mental health spheres.

Frustration towards a situation that is producing such financial burdens and disrupting a livelihood that was once enjoyable and profitable fronts a number of unhealthy behaviours undertaken as a means to obscure the pressures found in the lives of farmers. Those noted in the data and supported in the literature emerged as sub-themes and included *Depression, Suicide, Substance Abuse, and Domestic Violence.*
Sub-theme: Depression.

The data indicated a loss of interest in farming as a result of the changes and impacts to the business of agriculture. This is consistent with the previous data from community members and is noted by this participant:

_**I think the majority of them [farmers] would like to just leave the farm...you often hear comments about it’s not fun anymore...it’s more of a job.**_

This loss of interest can be a symptom of depression and as noted in the primary data:

_Depression rates are very high in Saskatchewan.

In literature reviewed, Fraser et al. (2005) indicate that psychological factors relating to farming include “high levels of stress, depression and anxiety” (p. 341). Brannen et al. (2009), Gregoire (2002), and Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) also note depression and anxiety result from farm stress. According to the participant, the incidence of depression and anxiety is widespread in the farming community. Along with these concerns are feelings of low self-esteem and co-dependency, known indicators of depression. This is more specific to farm women who may be more isolated on the farm with the responsibility of care for younger children or a lack of transportation or funds to seek relationships beyond the farm, according to the participant. Fraser et al. (2005) also speak to the incidence of low self-worth in men, socialized to be the providers for the family. Men may have feelings of being usurped, with the need for a more active role of women in farming as well as to see their battle within global agriculture as reflective of their skill in the struggle to manage the financial viability of their farms.

The data provided through Statistics Canada (2012) indicates that perceived mental health in Saskatchewan, indicated as fair or poor, has increased quite substantially over the
period from 2003 to 2011. This data also points out that the perceived life stress of the population has decreased slightly. The incidence of mood disorders for the province in the same time period has risen significantly.

Fatigue noted above as a consequence of long hours and double or triple duty can also be symptomatic of depression, although it was not expressed as such within the primary or secondary data or the literature reviewed.

**Sub-theme: Suicide.**

The participant indicated a disturbing rise in suicide within the farming community. This is supported by the secondary data gathered from Statistics Canada (2012) that indicates death by suicide or self-inflicted injury has risen in Saskatchewan during the period of 2003 to 2011. The suicide rate in the geographical area of study ranges at ten per 100,000 people; noted within the average range for suicide within Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Ministry of Health, 2011). Saskatchewan rates are consistent with those found in the other prairie provinces that also sport a high number of farmers and a dependence on the economic viability of agriculture (Statistics Canada, 2012). The participant stated that the incidence of suicide is higher in males, congruent with statistical data that reports males are three times as likely to complete suicide as females. Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) concur and, along with Statistics Canada (2012), indicate that males use more lethal means, such as hanging or shooting. Statistics Canada indicates that the incidence of suicide occurs less in married couples than in those who are single, divorced, or widowed. While depression is stated as the most common factor in suicide attempts or completion, other aspects also factor in suicide. These are alarmingly consistent with the stressors found in the agricultural community and
include marriage failure, financial stress, major losses, and a lack of social support (Statistics Canada, 2012).

**Sub-theme: Substance abuse.**

Brannen et al. (2009) cite alcohol and drug abuse as one of the major negative behaviours that result from the depression and anxiety associated with farm stress. This is one of the unhealthy means of coping identified by the participant:

*I know that Saskatchewan right now has the highest number of rates of alcoholism per capita in the country. Also the highest number of impaired drivers per capita in Saskatchewan, in the country [sic].*

In exploring secondary data, Statistics Canada indicated that, over the period from 2003 to 2011, rates of heavy drinking have risen in Saskatchewan (2012). The primary data reveals that adults over the age of 40 typically use alcohol, while those in their thirties and younger tend to use a mix of alcohol and drugs. Marihuana is stated as a popular drug among the younger population, while cocaine and morphine are used less frequently; their drug use typically occurs in social situations with peers. The participant stated that the incidence of alcohol use is consistent between men and women; however, women are inclined to use in private. This is congruent with isolation being a more prevalent factor for women, who are more confined to the home due to transportation issues or child care responsibilities. The participant stated that low self-esteem and co-dependency also play a role in women’s alcohol use.

**Sub-theme: Family violence.**

Family violence is noted in the data and indicated by Brannen et al. (2009) in the literature as a behaviour resulting from the ineffective coping of farm stress. The participant noted an increase in feelings of animosity towards farming and other farmers within an
agriculture that ascribes to competition within the marketplace, and is a needed constituent in the business of farming. Irritability can be tied with animosity and is linked to the incidence of violence, according to the participant. In reference to family violence, the participant stated:

_We’re seeing a lot of domestic violence…lot of family with emotional abuse problems._
_Physical, emotional. More emotional than anything._

The participant continued:

_I do believe that some of it is definitely related to the way things are on the farm today, yes._

Family violence in Canada in 2011, according to Statistics Canada (2013), is indicated as declining, yet this form of violence continues to represent 26 percent of violent crime reported to police. Saskatchewan is listed second to the three territories in rates of family violence. Statistics indicate that almost half of reported violence occurs in current or previous marital or common law relationships; 80 percent of the victims of violence are females, while almost 20 percent are the children of offenders. Thirteen percent include violence in the extended family.

The most frequent form of violence noted in Statistics Canada data is common assault, which includes pushing, slapping, or punching without serious injury. Major assault falls second and includes the use of weapons and may result in injury. These data are not area-specific; however, it did name Saskatoon as the city with the highest incidence of reported family violence (Statistics Canada, 2013). While Statistics Canada indicated that the rates of family violence are decreasing, the participant indicated the opposite and stated that family and non-familial violence is increasing in the province.
Conflict can also occur within marriage and family, according to the data, and can be aggravated during the busier farming seasons when time constraints and weather increase the pressures of farming. The participant states:

*The family...it’s all about priorities then, too, right. The farm is really the number one priority so family and kids kind of get pushed to the bottom of the list of priorities while the farm season is going.*

The participant stated that not one unhealthy coping mechanism prevailed in the area of study:

*I don’t see any one thing in particular or any one thing that stands out more than the other. It’s just, you know, the whole aspect of what’s happening out there today, whether...it’s depression, or whether it’s anxiety, or whether it’s alcohol abuse, or whatever the case may be. Gambling is another big thing. You know people will kind of gravitate to whatever makes them feel good...in ways of coping.*

**Theme: Resources**

The primary data indicated a number of resources that are available as a means to support the population at large facing a myriad of struggles that impact their mental wellness. While a number of formal supports were noted in the data, also revealed were obstacles in accessing resources. These will be identified under the sub-theme *Barriers to Resources* and will be discussed below.

While there are resources available to the rural community, the participant stated:

*I see a lot of them are trying to cope on their own until they can’t anymore. And they will come in in crisis.*

One resource identified in the primary data is the *Health Line*. This service, according to secondary data, is a government of Saskatchewan-supported call centre available at no charge to residents. Information and support is provided by registered nurses, registered
psychiatric nurses, and social workers 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The Health Line, as indicated by the participant, has the benefit of medical information, as well as crisis counselling for mental health situations, thus providing a comprehensive service to the population. The participant explained that the predecessor to this resource was the *Farm Stress Line*. This resource was initiated in the early 1990s as a peer-supported telephone resource, designed primarily to address the needs of the farming population who were experiencing significant stress due to the changes occurring in agriculture (Niki Gerrard, personal communication, January 7, 2013). An assistant director of regional services for one of the health regions in Saskatchewan, who requested anonymity, explained that the Farm Stress Line fell under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture and was seen as an integral resource for the province’s farming community (Anonymous, personal communication, January 29, 2013). The assistant director stated that the evolution to the Health Line and the move from the Department of Agriculture to that of the Ministry of Health is seen as a more inclusive, helping measure. Although this person agreed to the effectiveness of peer support, they suggested that the trained professionals now servicing the call centre are providing an effective and important service to the population as a whole. The participant concurred that peer support was a valuable resource and stated:

*Well, I think talking to peers is a big benefit, you know, because then they’re [farmers] able to realize that they’re not out there alone.*

Additional resources, the participant stated, include an online resource for depression available through the University of Regina. Secondary data indicated that this program, entitled *Online-CBT*, provides information regarding depression which a person is able to review prior to online correspondence with a therapist (University of Regina, 2013). This resource was cited as an accessible and convenient means to address depression, generalized
anxiety and/or panic with trained therapists using cognitive behavioural therapy. Online resources are seen as effective in supporting the population through an avenue that is easy to access and can offer anonymity and confidentiality—indicated by the participant as extremely important for rural residents.

The participant indicated that resources also include workshops presented to the school population and the Telehealth resource provided through the Ministry of Health. This resource offers health services through live video-conferencing to local health offices. *Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Step Program* is available and is well-known as an effective and supportive resource, according to the participant. Supports are also available through the Mental Health and Addictions offices that are located within the health regions. This service provides individual counselling through long- and short-term sessions as determined by the needs of the clients. Group work is also offered; however, it is predominately attended by women. Office visits are the norm. However, the participant indicated:

*No, we travel if we have to. So if I have somebody who doesn’t have a driver’s licence...and they can’t come to me, if the situation is safe, then I will go to them.*

Safety assessments are completed, at times over the telephone, although the participant stated a preference for an initial office visit as a means to determine safety and to make a plan for support.

In summing up the formal resources that are available to the farming community, the participant expressed:

*There is [sic] resources out there, however, I think, in the rural area, we’re deficient compared to what the cities have to offer.*

In light of this statement, the sub-theme, *Barriers to Resources*, as identified in the data, follows.
**Sub-theme: Barriers to resources.**

A number of conditions were identified that pose barriers to accessing services. Although the data indicated a number of resources, including those online, the lack of adequate resources in rural communities was noted as a barrier. This is consistent with the studies undertaken by Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) and Malone (2011). The participant data indicated a discrepancy between the resources available in the larger centres and those existing in the rural areas, as well the large area that rural professionals are required to serve. In the area specific to this research, there are two staff, one addictions counsellor and one mental health therapist, to coverage an area of approximately 100 square kilometres. As indicated previously, the staff will travel to see clients; however, there is an expectation for people to attend the mental health office in order to accommodate a greater number of clients.

The expectation of people coming to services brings forward another barrier. The participant stated that the accessibility of services poses difficulty for people due to the centrality of the mental health office and the distance that some must travel in order to seek help. Along with distance, transportation and associated costs can be a factor. The participant stated:

*If I have clients who have lost their licences for impaired driving or whatever the case may be, then they need to depend on rides. And you know, sometimes the farms are quite a distance away and just driving in, because of the expenses, is difficult.*

The expense of travel, which includes vehicle fuel and potentially a meal as the trip may well take the better part of a day, can be prohibitive at a time when financial burdens are already heavy for farmers. There is also the monetary impact of time taken away from farm
work and/or off-farm work, as well as the expense for childcare, if required. The cost of time associated with accessing services is also a factor as indicated:

*And sometimes... time. They’re working hard. Having the time to come in for appointments or going to meetings, or whatever the case may be, is not an option.*

The participant has noted the time is a significant factor in the farming business due to the dependence on time-specific operations, such as planting and harvesting. Tied into this is the reliance on weather conditions that dictate when the work must be done. In these peak times of farming, it is beyond the inherent responsibility and financial capacity of farmers to remove themselves from their work to attend to personal needs such as mental health services.

The data also indicates that stigma is primary in accessing mental health services. Malone (2011) speaks to the dignity, independence, and stoicism of farmers, as well as their socialization that instills an oppositional attitude toward mental wellness. The view taken by some is that of “just getting on with it” (Peck et al., cited in Fraser et al., 2005, p. 345). Fraser et al. state that shame and fear of judgement are of significance in seeking support, to which the participant adds:

*I think it’s intimidating for some of them sometimes, men in particular, to come into a professional for help.*

The participant indicated that part of the fear is that of confidentiality and being seen in the small community coming in or out of the mental health office. The participant states:

*For us out here in the rural area, you know, it’s not like being in the city where you don’t know everybody... but out here, it’s kind of like everybody knows everybody...*

The participant indicated that the stigma of accessing mental health services, however, appears to be less a barrier for farm women and group work is seen as a great benefit for them as a means to address their concerns. With the greater isolation that women
can experience on the farm, this could be seen as a social outlet and a means to understand that they are not alone in their struggles.

Education was seen as a significant obstacle in accessing resources. The participant indicated that people may not be aware of the formal resources available, or the means to access them. Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) identify a lack of awareness regarding resources and the need for better communication in informing the public of what is available. Providing information and educating people plays a considerable role in offering support and is paramount, according to the participant, in alleviating concerns such as confidentiality and the stigma that surrounds mental health. Aiding a client in understanding their position is significant in buttressing crisis situations. The participant stated the importance of information:

*I try to educate a lot about human rights and, you know, we have the right to be respected...and what abuse is and things like that.*

The participant continues:

*And confidentiality is a big thing out here in the rural area as well. Sometimes they don't want to be seen coming into our office or, you know, they're a little afraid of a breach of confidentiality and things like that so they have to be really, really educated on what confidentiality is.*

While the necessity for education is indicated in the data as a route to demystifying the stigma associated with mental health and to eliminate the hurdles in accessing services, the services themselves can be seen as a barrier for some farmers. In respect to the provincial *Telehealth* program, as mentioned above, where services are delivered via video-conferencing, the participant states:
I can see its benefit, but also I don’t know…sometimes many people just need that face to face and to be right there to be able to talk…I know with some of the older people here, I don’t think it’s going to go over very well.

The accessibility of online services can also present a barrier, particularly for people who are wrestling with technology or may not have access to computers and online supports. Online supports, although readily available in the provision of services, stated the participant, does not replace the social component that is becoming scarce within an isolated community.

The findings in the literature that indicate a reluctance of farmers to seek formal supports is in direct relationship to their belief that professionals do not understand the unique needs of the farming population (Malone, 2011; Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). Malone is strong in her belief that farmers’ situations are distinct and thus, the type of intervention should be specific to their needs. While the research participant concurred that the resources to address farmer specific concerns are lacking, it was stated:

I think the supports are out there and it’s evolving for the rural area especially…[we] have really been advocating for more supports and what we can do to create better supports…for our rural area here.

With the supports available, although numbered, the participant attributes successes to the clients and states:

I definitely see success. But it takes a lot of work and a lot of determination and a lot of change of the way they think and the way they do things, absolutely.

In speaking of informal supports that are present in the community, the participant refers to the characteristics of resiliency that are found in the farming sector. This will be discussed under the theme Resiliency in the following section.
Theme: Resiliency

The primary data noted several community characteristics that are influential in supporting community members in relation to ineffective coping. The participant indicated:

*Resiliency—that goes back to people’s values...how important is it to them to resist falling into the trend and things like that.*

The participant indicated hard work and determination as prominent characteristics of community resiliency as well as the value that members place on supporting one another. A sense of community was stated to be more readily realized in smaller centres, while a more individualistic stance is found in larger centres. The participant indicated that, within the focus area, a sense of connectedness lends itself to cooperation and sees reciprocal support and help in times of need. This relates to Malone’s (2011) statement regarding the inclusiveness of communities that “sees individual concerns as a community consideration” (p. 290).

The services within the community, according to the participant, do impact the cohesiveness of the community. With the loss of services such as the school and church, once the hub of social activity and community support, fewer opportunities are available to nurture community connectedness. For services that remain, there are notable differences in the activities, reflective of changing times. The participant states:

*Yes, it’s not quite like it used to be that’s for sure. And I don’t know if I can even explain the changes...in the whole big scheme of things...I think our traditions are kind of getting lost along the way.*

The participant indicated that there has been a change in the thinking and the actions of the farming community as they adapt to the change to agriculture. While burdens are evident, so is the will of the community to take change in stride. The participant noted:
Saskatchewan people are pretty resilient at times. They can be when they want to be and they can pull together when they want to.

In sum, from the two contexts, that of the community and that of mental health, the story of the community was told and a comprehensive picture developed regarding what the community is experiencing and how its characteristics are driving its reaction, resistance, and resiliency in light of significant change. A thematic analysis of the primary and secondary data identified a number of themes and sub-themes that have a direct relationship to the literature and my research question. The analysis has provided for an appreciation and understanding of the impacts to farmers as a result of corporatized agriculture and their means to resolve their situation. A discussion of the themes and recommendations from this analysis will follow in the next chapter.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

My aim throughout this research project has been to gain an understanding of the role that corporate agriculture has and continues to play in the changes to agriculture in Canada. I was hopeful that in understanding the changes, I would have a greater comprehension of the impact that these changes have on a small rural community, as well as an appreciation of the means in which the community has reconciled these changes. My interest and curiosity lead me to a prairie town where I was honoured with the story of the community. In exploring these stories through a thematic analysis, a number of themes emerged that satisfied my goal for a greater understanding and appreciation the community’s reaction, their resistance, and resiliency in the midst of incredible change. The following discussion will highlight the outcome of this research as it relates to the data that was gathered from community members, a community professional, secondary data and the literature reviewed, and responds to my research question. Recommendations that are born of the research will be provided.

The Discussion

The premise of this research was to gain an understanding and appreciation of the situation of agricultural change wherein a small community finds itself, and to discover this through collaboration with research participants representing the community. Through this collaboration and the lens of critical theory, I felt the understanding of the reaction of the community could be a mutual endeavour that would applaud community resistance in light of change and champion their resiliency as they continue their stance to meet their social, cultural, political, and economic needs.
In order to establish a framework for the exploration of impacts that were experienced by the community, the first phase of the data analysis focused on the changes that have occurred in agriculture in Canada beginning in the late 1970s. This time frame was based on that noted in the literature as the period of dramatic change with the move to a market-driven management of agriculture. This period was confirmed by research participants as the time when the greatest changes were seen in their community. Solbrig (2001) refers to this period as a socio-economic movement from an industrial society to an information society. Solbrig states “as in any social transformation there are winners and losers” and while the outcome of this relatively new movement is yet to be determined, he continues, “in some quarters at this time there are more that are losing than not” (p. 4). In the interim, communities worldwide are seeing the implications. The information revolution, as Solbrig names it, resulted from a three events: advances in the science of electronics and biology, the re-structuring of the world economy, and the reorganization of the social realm. Agriculture has been impacted by the lot. As Solbrig expresses, a welfare state ideology and the recession in the 1970s gave way to a market-driven economy and governmental deregulation, privatization, and trade reforms that reduced tariffs and promoted international trade. The instantaneous technology of computers and the discovery of DNA and the means to alter the property of living organisms made its way into agriculture, while social transformation that sported rights movements saw a change the structure of families and the workforce and brought attention to the environment. The intertwining of these three elements is evident in the data and the literature regarding this research project. I have looked at these elements as political with the restructuring of government from a welfare state to a market-driven one. The political
interconnects with the economic component which in turn intersects with the social and cultural element of community.

The changes that have wrought the most significant and devastating impact to the community were the economic changes that saw small farmers on the losing end. Federal legislation and shifts in policy brought an end to governmental support in two of the most crucial areas of the farming venture: financial support for grain transportation and a farmer‘s voice in the collective marketing of grain. The former resulted in exorbitant increases in farm operating costs while the latter stifled the one farmer collective that provided some marketing power for farmers in the global marketplace. The third change noted in the data is that of the farm landscape. With the world’s population growing exponentially, the need for greater food production ensued (Solbrig, 2001). This need for increased growing capacity has resulted in the acquisition of huge tracts of land and massive farms. These farms are in the hands of landowners with the financial means to expand their operations or within those of business corporations, interprovincial, or international investors. The small landholder with little financial maneuverability to play in this competitive field is forced out, as one research participant stated, with the likelihood of becoming a statistic of urban migration. The absence of once busy farmsteads and vibrant small communities as a result of huge farm acquisitions has drastically altered the farming landscape. Add to this the re-grassing of land not suitable for crops and the bio-technology that supports crop diversity and continuous planting through chemical and fertilizer support, and a very different, and seemingly lonely, landscape emerges.

These changes have resulted in significant costs to the farming community. Most notable is the economic upheaval that is being experienced by farmers. Costs move beyond
the economic, however, and permeate into the social, cultural, and political foundations of community. These costs were identified as the themes within this ambit of the research. These themes are not linear, but, as noted above, are interconnected and interdependent with one another and speak to the unimaginable angst for farmers and their communities.

The economic costs are the most tangible and comprehensible and have caused the greatest mayhem in the farming community. Rocketing expenses, as noted in the sub-themes, include farm operating costs, equipment and technology, and the costs of land and transportation. Farm operating costs are driven by the world market and the corporations who control the inputs—the fuel, and seed, chemicals, and fertilizers. The farming operation is dependent also on the technology that provides these products and the equipment required to farm and transport grains and livestock to market. To play a competitive role in market agriculture, the acquisition of land is also essential to establish a farming operation that is large enough to contend with market pressures and remain viable. This in turn drives up land prices and places it out of the reach of small and financially strapped farmers. The inputs, the technically advanced equipment, and the land are necessary in market-driven agriculture, and to them are bound the costs. This places farmers in a position dependent on the corporations, yet also locates them in one of competition with these same corporations within the marketplace. For the small farmer, the insurmountable expenses of today’s agriculture have left them with massive debt, fiscally unmanageable farming operations and, in dire situations, the loss of their farms. This economic strife unsettles the community as a whole and belies the institution of government that promotes market-managed agriculture in the best interest for “the future potential of Canada” and “the goals of Canadians” (Whalen & Abbott, 1977, p. 16). Ife (2002) states that communities can become economically deprived with “the logic
of the global market and ‘free trade,’ leaving behind closed factories, lost jobs, devastated communities and personal despair” (p. 167). Certainly, the market’s role in agriculture has left the community of study in such straits. Policy changes that subscribe to the market led to the abdication of government supports for transportation and the subsequent closure of rail lines and grain elevators. The impacts streamed throughout the community and left it devoid of businesses, services, and the population that provided them. For want of a solid position in the global economy, the “economic rationalism” according to Ife (p. 167), explains away government support in deference to fiscal management, market-driven competition and free trade. Ife states, however, that this logic does not take into consideration the social costs to communities and adds “the needs of individuals, families and communities are effectively sacrificed in the interests of transnational capital” (p. 168).

The social costs to the community were tied with the cultural impacts in this research and analyzed under the second theme, socio-cultural costs. These costs to the community and its members included the disruption of traditional roles and lifestyles as a result of corporatized agriculture. Ales and Solbrig (2001) state that “Each social organization is associated with certain modes of agricultural production and the mismatch between social organization and agricultural production usually produces many social problems” (p. 67). In point, they state that the larger farms and the machinery required to manage them greatly diminishes the need for farm labour and leads to the departure of small or inefficient farmers from the land, and subsequently forcing their rural communities out of existence. The transition to larger farms, discussed above regarding a tangible change to the agricultural landscape, were also instrumental in the social and cultural transformations within the
community, as vigorously stated by research participants. These emerged as the sub-themes
role changes, off-farm work, costs of time, and lifestyle changes.

The role changes were directly related to the economic need for smaller farmers to
supplement their farm income with off-farm work where either one or both farmers in a
family operation struck out to take on this task as a means to keep the farm afloat. Farm
women, traditionally in the roles of homemaker and child caregiver, saw this required shift in
roles take them from the home and into the community of off-farm employment, resulting in
needs such as child care for the young members of the family. Depopulation was also noted
in the data, in particular, with extended family, which removed a source of farm labour and
once again saw family roles altered. In some cases, this led the movement of the farm
homemaker from the home and into the field, causing further upheaval within families. One
participant referred to on- and off-farm work requirements as double duty. In some instances,
the literature refers to a triple shift, where the homemaker was required to undertake both on-
and off-farm duties in addition to homemaking tasks. The increase in on- and off-farm work
speaks, as well, to the costs of time and travel needed for farmers to fulfill these roles.

Research participants indicated that loss of population and changing roles within the
family, as a result of corporate agriculture, also disrupts rural values and the organization of a
community. Significant diversity departs with the people in what di Castri (2001) refers to as
“rural desertification” (p. 499), and leaves behind a community with a floundering sense of
identify and culture. Ife (2002) refers to this disruption as the “globalisation of culture”
(p. 180) and opines that culture is becoming ever more universal due to global media that is,
for the most part, controlled by or managed in the interest of corporations. This uniformity
disrupts the distinct culture of communities and, as di Castri (2001) states, leaves them sporting a more homogeneous culture.

Ife (2002) indicates that culture is also being commodified and adds that “cultural activity becomes something that is produced, packaged, bought and sold, rather than something which is the property of the whole community and in which people are free to participate” (p. 180). Ife continues to state that activities are “done by the few for the consumption of the many,” and places professionals in the active role of entertainment and the remainder of the population as “primarily the passive one of consumer of the packaged product (p. 181). The participants in the research indicated a change in the attitudes and lifestyles of community members. Ife’s commodification of culture could be seen as providing some meaning for the reported changes—the need for boats and campers, trips, and other material possessions. These goods could be related to the consumer culture that bombards the population from social media and can be seen as a universality of perceived needs and as a sense of identity. Activities are now pursued on a more individualistic basis and participants indicated that this is quite a departure from the traditional community activities that were inclusive and the primary source of socialization.

Ife (2002) states that the interaction of neighbouring communities through activities brought to the fore the diversity that each community offered, and was significant in establishing their unique sense of identity. The importance of the social gatherings were stated by participants as a means to connect with neighbours and offered a reprieve from the heavy work of the farm. Intertwined with this commodified culture of Ife’s are the social ramifications that participants noted: a more isolated and fractured community. Also expressed by participants was the cost/benefit of social media or the winning or losing
outcomes, as Solbrig (2001) expressed in regard to the information revolution. The benefits of instant information and the availability to perform business transactions provide substantial savings in time and money for the farmer. There is also the accessibility and confidentiality of online health services to address the mental health needs of the community. Social media and electronic relationships, however, contribute to the isolation of some members and a social disconnection within the community.

The research participants, however, reported some recovery in their social and cultural community and attribute this to younger people who have remained in or have made their way back to the community and the farming venture. The vitality of these members is fused with the wisdom and experiences of the older population and has revived some community traditions that had waned for a time. While ages and needs may be different, the participants stated that the overall values of the group converge and offer hope for a renewed sense of community. “Having the hope to do something about one’s circumstances,” states Dominelli (2012), “is crucial to communities becoming confident and feeling empowered” (p. 82). Consistent with Ife (2002), who indicates that the recovery and maintenance of cultural traditions must come from the community, one participant indicated “It is coming from within.” Ife’s statement, “The principle of diversity requires that diversity of culture be retained; it is culture which gives people that critical sense of identity and belonging” aligns with the community’s hope in reviving their traditions and establishing a sense of identity and community belonging within the changing landscape of agriculture (p. 180).

The third theme resulting from the data was that of political costs. Ife (2002) indicates a close association between politics and power and stresses the need to decipher power at both a structural and local level to determine how “power is distributed and how it is
maintained and exercised” (p. 175). The political power historically held by farmer collectives, as noted in the literature, was instrumental in the development of policy and programs for the benefit of farmers. Research participants indicted that the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) was one such collective that allowed for a farmer voice in the marketing of grain. The introduction of policy change to this marketing agency and the legislated requirements for a farmer vote were ignored by the federal government and further questionable political wrangling at their hand saw the collective quashed. These actions speak loudly to structural dominance and an unequal balance of power that impeded a fair farmer response to government policy initiatives. This leaves a sense of disempowerment within the farming community at large. Empowerment flames, however, with the ongoing contest between farmers and the government in front of the Canadian Court, with the farmer collective called the Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board. Other farmer collectives, such as the National Farmers Union, continue to petition the federal government in regards to the immense financial impacts to farmers as a result of government policy. These collectives offer a sense of empowerment for farmers and hope in obtaining the government’s ear.

The empowerment of communities within the structural confines of government has taken a blow, yet the capacity of the community within regional boundaries has seen some success. One participant spoke the collective efforts of the community in standing against the closure of services in the community. While successful in one incidence and not in another, the community recognized the power they held in their collective stance. One participant also describes the success of a farmer collective that initiated the purchase of a rail line in the area as a means to ship their grain more affordably, in the aftermath of rail line and elevator closures. This community action was affirmed by the federal government’s support and
direction given to the Canadian Pacific Railway—that they must cooperate and transport the rail cars to coastal shipping ports. This illustrates the need, according to Ife (2002), for participation in decision making within the community as a means to develop the community’s capacity to manoeuvre within the local, the regional, as well as the greater political realm. The actions taken by the community reflect the organizational skills of community members in their resistance to policy that adversely impacted their community and in the solidarity that was demonstrated to see these actions through. This, according to Brannen et al. (2009), reveals the social capital—the human resources and the actions they take—within this community.

The above discussion was concerned with the changes identified as the result of corporate agriculture and the economic, socio-cultural, and political impacts to the community. The following will focus on the mental health impacts and the resources that support the wellness of the farming community.

The second story in this research was told by a community mental health professional. This participant spoke of the changes to agriculture and shared the impacts that are felt by farming communities as the result of corporate agriculture from this perspective. This participant’s interpretation of the changes and impacts concurred with those of the community participants. The stressors that resulted were identified and the immense financial burden placed on farmers was recognized as the most prevalent source of stress. The transitions in farming were noted, as well as the competitive nature of farming and a shift from a supported environment to that of an individualized one. This unsettling of the economic situation of farmers, from a mental health perspective, interconnects with the social
and cultural elements of the community and is consistent with those voiced by the community participants.

Role changes, off-farm employment, and lifestyle changes were stated by this participant as having a significant impact on and causing great stress to families. Compounding this unsettling, according to Malone (2011), is the loss of hope that the farming population is seeing as economic difficulties continue to mount. Within a contest of hope and futility, the farming population continues to struggle and in doing so seeks out means to have their needs met.

The participant stated that the community has responded to the impacts and stressors of farming in a number of positive ways that have brought community members together in resistance. Also noted, however, were unhealthy responses that have compromised the mental wellness of some members. Significant increases in depression and anxiety have resulted in reactionary behaviours such as substance use and gambling, family conflict and violence, non-familial conflict, in particular, animosity between neighbours due to increased competition and, very disturbingly, completed suicides. The participant indicated that farmers struggle independently to reconcile the changes in their lives and typically seek helping services only when they reach crisis.

The participant indicated a number of resources that are available to the rural community and the successes that are observed due to the tenacity and commitment of many seeking help. Services include mental health offices within the regional health authorities, as well as online sources that offer confidential support to those who are able to manoeuvre through the virtual world. The participant emphasized, however, that not all those in need are able to access this service and the continued provision of face-to-face support is essential.
Solbrig (2001) states that we find ourselves amid the information revolution that offers much benefit in the way of instant information and a means of support through online and social media. This medium, however, also promotes isolation and a reliance on electronic relationships as opposed to human interaction and support.

The data and the literature both point to the need for additional resources. Geographical distance from services and the isolated locations of some farms result in limited services within reach of the rural community. Barriers to services involve the distance to travel for many people as well as the expense and time needed to access these services, making it unrealistic when taking into consideration the responsibilities of farm and off-farm work and family.

The data and literature both commented on the stigma associated with mental health as a significant obstacle. Malone (2011) states that stigma is the result of a social and collective attitude within communities that views mental illness, and seeking support to address it, as a weakness. As presented in the data and the literature, there is a dire need for education to dispel the myths of mental health and address the accompanying stigma. The participant stated that education regarding confidentiality and individual rights in relation to relationships and violence is also vital for the rural population. There is a lack of awareness regarding available mental health supports, and the dissemination of information in this regard is also desperately needed.

Malone (2011) and Sturgeon and Morrissette (2010) confirm the participants’ voicing of the need for resources specific to the farming population. Malone strongly indicates that the universal services that exist do not take into consideration the unique needs of farmers. Noted in the data is the move from a farmer and peer-supported farm crisis line, funded
through the Department of Agriculture, to that of a health call centre under the Ministry of Health. The Healthline is geared to the Saskatchewan population at large and is not farmer-specific. Although the service is staffed by mental health professionals, social workers and nurses, the peer element is excluded. Both the data and the literature indicate that it is crucial that professionals providing support services to this population have a sound understanding of the unique needs of farmers. While the characteristics of farmers include stoicisum, conservatism, and the need for the interconnectivity of others, Malone states that characteristics of the farming community are difficult to define because of the diversity within communities. This highlights the indication in the data and literature that a barrier to services includes the notion of farmers that professionals do not have a good understanding of farmer needs.

A uniqueness of informal community support, states Malone (2011), includes a community connectedness that “sees individual concerns as a community consideration” (p. 290). This support can answer the need for understanding of unique needs; however, it does place members in a position where the concerns of the community may be unwelcome. This speaks to the need for anonymity and confidentiality, deemed of the utmost importance to the farming population.

While the struggles of the farming community have been discussed above, their resiliency in light of the changes in the agricultural landscape must also be mentioned. Dominelli (2012) states that “resilience is an important component of community development because this characteristic is formed through the collective negotiation of the norms that bind together people who may be very different from each other” (p. 204). The literature also speaks to characteristics of communities that provide a forum for resiliency.
These include such qualities such as pride and determination, unfettered communication as well as cooperation, leadership, and connectedness (Brannen et al., 2009; Malone, 2011; Sturgeon & Morrissette, 2010). Brannen et al. refer to the human resources and the activities they perform as a social capital that forges resilience and assists in mitigating stressful situations. The research participants alluded to the social capital and strengths of individuals who have moulded their community.

Storytelling was one of these strengths and one that was evident as stories were told to me as part of this research endeavour. Stories bridged a connection between me and a community little known to me, yet held the significance of paternal roots. It has also bridged a generational gap between the seasoned and the younger community members, through stories of their families and an earlier and more vivacious community. Humour was deemed a characteristic, where laughter heals where other means could not. The inclusiveness of the community, although fragmented by the loss of families and a changing lifestyle, was also evident in the stories and the trust those remaining in the community place in one another. There was genuineness in the stories that spoke of the pride and perseverance, of the cooperation and accomplishment that affords the community the capacity to adapt to some changes, and take resistive action in response to others in order to overcome their struggles due to the change in the agricultural landscape. Dominelli (2012) defines adaptive and reactive resiliency that was evidenced in the community’s response. While adaptive resiliency refers to “strengthening the system’s existing capacity to resist change and maintain the status quo,” Dominelli states that, in proactive resilience “people consider change inevitable and seek to develop systems that can readily adapt to new demands and situations…to reduce vulnerability and enhance future viability” (p. 66). The collective
response to change and the values of the community equate to a resiliency and, as participants stated, a sense of community that is evident in this small, rural farm town.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations were considered from the perspective of critical theory and the structural oppression that farmers are experiencing, resulting in such extreme difficulties and the unsettling of their social, cultural, economic, and political community. As government ideology shifted support for the farming community to that of business and instigated a dramatic imbalance of power that sees profit gains for corporations and farmers struggling to make ends meet, is an area where recommendations evolve. The impact of these changes resulted in great devastation for farmers in regard to their financial stability, and in some dire cases, the ability to remain on the farm. With primary data support, statistics indicate that there is an increase in ineffective coping skills that further exacerbate desperate situations.

Many of the articles reviewed for this research recommended and urged more research regarding the impacts to farmers and the supports needed to address this farming crisis. Thus, the recommendations that result from this research include:

1. Education and awareness campaigns to inform the public of the changes in agriculture and the impacts to the farming community.
2. Support of farmer and consumer collectives that will regain a voice in policy making for the benefit of farmers and initiate change to legislation for a greater balance in power and income between farmers and corporations.
3. Resistance to government malingering and disregard for legislated requirements that support farmers.
4. Ongoing research into the detrimental impacts to the social, cultural, economic, political, and spatial elements of communities.

5. Ongoing research into the impacts of stress on farming communities including those specific to gender, age, and children.

6. Research on the impact to farmers regarding their need or choice for urban migration.

7. Ongoing research into the availability of mental health services for rural communities and the effectiveness and the appropriateness of resources to meet unique farmer needs.

8. Education and awareness campaigns to inform the farming populations of available mental health supports and assist in removing the stigma associated with mental health.

Conclusion

In chapter one I discussed the passion of author Vanmala Hiranandani (2008) regarding the devastation of agriculture in developing countries as a result of neo-liberalism and the global marketplace management of agriculture, and her plea for fair and equitable measures. Canada is in a much different sphere than the developing countries that Hiranandani was referring to—India, Africa, and in South America and yet there are considerable parallels: higher production costs and lower incomes for farmers, reduced financial support, an onus on global rather than domestic food production, and a dependence on corporate patented seed. These factors have devastated farmers in Canada and resulted in lost farms and urban migration, increased poverty, and compromised health. There appeared to be a similitude between these developing countries and Canada in terms of the depleted
social, cultural, and economic fabric of our communities that Hiranandani states is “robbing people of their livelihoods and support systems” (p. 44).

This article compelled me to look into the state of agriculture in Canada and led to my specific research question regarding the changes and the impact of these changes on a rural prairie community, located in Saskatchewan, as well as the characteristics of the community that guides their reconciliation. This research supports the parallel between Hiranandani’s concerns and those that are occurring in Canada. Canada, however, has an edge over developing countries, according to Diaz-Bonilla (2001). Within the global market, developed countries see a larger proportion of agricultural export than developing countries as a result of protectionist trade policies, such as export subsidies and greater market access, that severely disadvantage developing countries. As the world market has not been kind to small Canadian farmers and devastation continues in developing countries, there needs to be a collective shout for justice and equity for all players within this market agriculture.
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Appendix A: Human Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Approval

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<th>Bonnie Reid</th>
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<td>Dr. Patricia Mackenzie</td>
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PROJECT TITLE: The Changing Landscape of Agriculture and Community: A Case Study of Community Change

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: Dr. Darica Cloutier-Fisher, Committee Member (UVic)
Darvel Watsamanuk, Committee Member

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

Modifications
To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

Renewals
Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures
When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

[Signature]
Dr. Rachael Scarth
Associate Vice-President, Research
Appendix B: Consent to Participate Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

Research Title: The Changing Landscape of Agriculture and Community: A Community Case Study

Researcher: Bonnie Reid  
MSW Candidate  
School of Social Work  
University of Victoria  
Victoria, BC  
780-870-1700  
bonnier@uvic.ca

You are being asked to participate in a research study that will gather information regarding the changes and impacts of corporatized agriculture on a small rural community and how the characteristics of the community influence its reactions, resiliency and resistance in light of these changes.

This qualitative research study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Mackenzie at 250-721-8735 or at email address patmack@uvic.ca as part of a research project for partial fulfillment of Master of Social Work requirements at the University of Victoria. This research is fully self-funded by the researcher. There are no external funders involved in supporting this research.

You have been chosen as a participant in this research due to your long standing experience and your intergenerational knowledge and skills in the field of agricultural production in a small rural community. As a representative member of your community, your insight into the changes that producers have experienced as a result of the corporatization of agriculture will lend valuable understanding of the impacts to your community.

This study has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria. If you have any concerns you can reach the Ethics Office at 250-472-4545 or email ethics@uvic.ca.

Before proceeding, there are a few ethical issues to consider:
Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without having to explain your reasons and with no consequences to you. Should you choose to withdraw from the research, any data that you have provided will be promptly destroyed and will not be used in the research report.

All information you provide will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected. Pseudonyms will be used to protect both your identity and that of your community. This measure is taken to prevent the only potential risk of the study, that being your perceptions of your community’s understanding of the corporatization of agriculture be made public. However, there may be limits to confidentiality that are beyond the control of the researcher. Due to the small size of your community other community members may discern who has participated in the research through any association with the researcher. Should this be uncomfortable for you, you will be encouraged to withdraw your interest in participating in this research project.

As the ways of traditional agriculture and the small family farming operation are facing enormous change, the potential benefits of your participation include a contribution to the historical testimony of the agricultural legacy of Canada. Taking into consideration the impacts of corporate agriculture, the traditional work and lifestyle that has been part of Canada’s agricultural heritage may become a way of the past. The ways in which your community is responding to these changes can potentially be a source of community sharing and collaboration in resiliency and growth with other rural communities and as a means of maintaining and honouring traditional skills and lifestyles within a changing world.

The research will occur over multiple occasions and will require a commitment of three to four (3-4) hours. These occasions will include an audio-recorded telephone interview lasting approximately two (2) hours that will be carried out at your residence or another location that is convenient for you. You will be asked to tell the story of your lived experiences as a representative of your community including the changes, the impacts and the reactions experienced by your community as a result of corporatized agriculture. The second occasion will be at a later date when the transcript of your interview will be made available to you and you will be required to verify accuracy and to remove any information that you do not wish to appear in the written and oral report. This will require approximately one (1) hour of your time. The third occasion will provide you with an opportunity to review the final report. This is optional and you are free to accept or decline this review which would require approximately one (1) hour of your time.

Information from this study will be stored and disposed of as follows. The written transcript and consent form will be stored in my personal, password protected laptop computer in my home office. The audio recording, the transcript and consent form will be erased from my computer after the final report is submitted. The final report will be provided to my academic supervisory committee in a written and oral report.
Your time and participation in this study is most appreciated and will be invaluable in contributing to the historical testimony of agriculture in Canada and in supporting other communities impacted by the changes brought about by corporatized agriculture. If you have any questions regarding this study, I can be reached at email address bonnier@uvic.ca or by calling 780-870-1700 or 778-350-1700.

Your signature indicates that you have read the above information, have had an opportunity to ask and have your questions answered, and you are agreeing to participate in this research study.

Consent to participate:

Print Name: ________________________________
Signature: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Reid
Appendix C: Modification of an Approved Protocol

**Modification of an Approved Protocol**

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<th>Bonnie Reid</th>
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**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

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**Certification**

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

Rachael Scarth
Dr. Rachael Scarth
Associate Vice-President, Research

Certificate Issued On: 13-Feb-13
AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

“The Changing Landscape of Agriculture and Community: A Community Study”

Major changes have taken place in agriculture over a number of years!

• LONGSTANDING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY BETWEEN 40 AND 80 YEARS OF AGE

• YOU HAVE SEEN AND LIVED THROUGH THESE CHANGES

• THREE HOURS OF YOUR TIME IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

• TELL YOUR STORY on how these changes have impacted you, your family and your community.

When: MAY 2012
How: Call or email Bonnie Reid, University of Victoria Master of Social Work Candidate
Before: May 24, 2012
At: 780-870-1700
bonnier@uvic.ca
April 16, 2012

Name of Business
Address of Business

Dear Sir or Madam:

Re: The Changing Landscape of Agriculture and Community: A Community Case Study

I am a Master of Social Work student from the University of Victoria in Victoria British Columbia. I am looking at your community as the focal point of my research as it is representative of many small, rural communities in Saskatchewan that are facing significant changes. Saskatchewan is also my birth province and my roots and interest in agriculture began here.

This study will explore the changes that have taken place in agriculture over the past number of years and the impact that these changes have had on your community. As I am looking for longstanding residents from your community to participate in this research, I am requesting that you post the enclosed brochure in your business where community members who may be interested in participating in this project will have an opportunity see it and respond.

If you have any questions regarding this research project and my request to post the brochure in your business, please call me at 780-870-1700 or email me at bonnier@uvic.ca.

Thank you for your assistance to getting the word of this project out to your community members.

In appreciation,

Bonnie Reid,
Master of Social Work Candidate,
University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia
Appendix F: Questionnaire Community Members

University of Victoria MSW Program Research Project Questionnaire

The Changing Landscape of Agriculture and Community: A Case Study of Community Change

Interviews will focus on a semi-structured format to allow for free narrative. The following questions will be a guideline.

1. There have been a great number of major changes in agriculture from the 1960’s to the present. Tell me about the changes that you have seen or experienced during this time.

2. Changes can be unique to a community based on such things as its rural or urban designation, distance from a major centre and opportunities for employment. Or they can be similar. Describe how the changes in your community are similar or different from other communities.

3. Your community encompasses farming families as well as families who are in supportive roles such as teachers, grocers, and mechanics. Who else do you identify as being in a supportive role in your community? Or outside of the community? (politicians, farm organizations)

4. Give me an account of the changes that have made the greatest impact on your community. (social, economical, environmental, political, ethical, spatial, cultural)

5. Tell me about the ways your community has reacted to these impacts. (Coping mechanisms - positive or negative, cohesion or isolation, solidarity or individualism) Describe the type of supports that have been available. (formal-agencies and informal-friends and family)

6. Resiliency of a community is the means by which a community can recover or rebound from change that has been difficult. Tell me about ways in which your community has shown resiliency in relation to the changes that it has seen as difficult as a result of the corporatization of agriculture.

7. Describe to me the ways in which your community has resisted the changes related to the corporatization of agricultural.

8. Tell me about the characteristics of your community; its strengths or barriers? Explain how these have helped, or hindered your community in light of changes due to corporatization of agriculture and how they can help guide your community in the future. (human and physical community)

9. The age of farmers is reported as being older now as young people need to, or choose to migrate to urban centres for employment. How do you think agriculture in your community, in Saskatchewan and in Canada can return to, or maintain sustainability where those who want to farm can do so and younger people can continue to be involved in this work and lifestyle?

10. What are your greatest memories of your community? What are your greatest wishes for your community?
Appendix G: Interview Questions Mental Health Professional

University of Victoria MSW Program Research Project Questionnaire

The Changing Landscape of Agriculture and Community: A Case Study of Community Change

Interviews will focus on a semi-structured format to allow for free narrative. The following questions will be a guideline.

11. There have been a great number of major changes in agriculture from the 1960’s to the present. Tell me about the changes that you have seen or experienced during this time. (social, economical, environmental, political, ethical, spatial, cultural)

12. As a mental health professional, what are the major stressors that you feel people are experiencing as a result of the significant changes to, not only their livelihoods, but also to their lifestyle?

13. Statistics Canada indicates an increase in health behaviours related to mental wellness including heavy alcohol use, obesity, mood disorders and suicide. Are you seeing this trend in the population that you serve? What other trends are present as people face these challenges?

14. What are the ways in which people have shown success in their coping of the farm situation? That are their strengths?

15. In what ways have people been unsuccessful? What are the barriers that people experience in coping with their difficult situations?

16. Describe the type of supports that are available. (formal-agencies and informal-friends and family)

7. Resiliency of a community is the means by which a community can recover or rebound from change that has been difficult. Tell me about ways in which communities have shown resiliency in relation to the changes as a result of the corporatization of agriculture that lends support to the mental well-being of the community and its members?