Understanding Rural:
A Comparison of Academic, Political and Lay Discourses of Rural

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING RURAL: A COMPARISON OF ACADEMIC, POLITICAL AND LAY DISCOURSES OF RURAL

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Rural is a word, which has many meanings and means different things to different people. Definitions of rural are often sorted into four broad categories; descriptive, socio-cultural, rural as a locality and rural as a social representation. Within each category various definitions exist each with strengths and weaknesses. This research seeks to understand and compare academic, political and lay discourses of rural in the case of Ingersoll, Ontario. A literature review was conducted to understand the academic discourses of rural. A content analysis of government policy and programming along with political election platform was used to understand the political discourses. A survey of residents of Ingersoll was used to determine the lay discourses of rural. The various discourses of rural were compared leading to a series of challenges being put forward for academia, members of the political sphere and citizens.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CIRRO: Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario

GTA: Greater Toronto Area

NAICS: North American Industry Classification System

NRRRI: Northern and Rural Recruitment and Retention Initiative

OCIF: Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund

OMAFRA: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs

PPS: Provincial Policy Statement

REB: Research Ethics Board

RED: Rural Economic Development

RIO: Rurality Index of Ontario
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Appendix 1: Ethics Certificate

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1 Introduction

The way communities are described matters and has impact not only on how a community is viewed, both by outsiders and members, but it also alters how the community is affected by policy and programming. In Ontario, and around the world, 'rural' does not always mean the same thing, and the chosen definition matters, especially when chosen for a specific reason. At times this justification may not always be appropriate, or even achieve the goal it was selected for. This introduction outlines the problem of understanding and translating meaning or perception to others. The following sections outline the objectives and research questions specific to this initiative. Outlining the questions and objectives provides the necessary background information and some theoretical perspective to accompany the remainder of the document.

Like many words used in daily life, 'rural' means different things to different people based on varied lived experiences and exposures. The vast majority of people have an understanding of what rural means to them, within the context of their life and these varied understandings are labeled conceptions (Babbie, 2004; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014; Kaplan, 1964). Conceptions are unique and individualistic, even if they are similar to the conceptions held by others (Kaplan, 1964). Conceptions are inherently individual because no two people carry the same life experiences or knowledge thus giving different perspective or information when forming conceptions (Kaplan, 1964). As
individuals gain more information or have new experiences their conceptions may change (Kaplan, 1964). Due to such varied individual conceptions of what constitutes rural it is a difficult term to define holistically in an all-encompassing manner. It also becomes a difficult term to use without first outlining what your conception is to others, so they are not confused with their own conception. Conceptions in themselves are difficult, if not impossible, to measure as it is not possible to directly observe them (Babbie, 2004; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014). In order to work with conceptions in a research context to answer questions or meet objectives we must first conceptualize our conceptions to remove any uncertainty (Babbie, 2004; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014). In order to conceptualize rural the imprecision of conceptions needs to be stripped away through a process of determining what we mean (Babbie, 2004; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014). This process could include not only defining the term but deciding if there are different types of rural, or if rural is different in various geographic contexts (Babbie, 2004; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014). Babbie (2004) uses the language of conception and conceptualization, however the same model is employed in many disciplines using varied language. Many scholars point to definitions rather than conceptualizations to describe the process of moving away from a conception. In some cases once a
conception has been defined it can be considered a phenomenon, or even the object of discourse. Figure 1.1 outlines Babbie’s (2004) model as he adapted and simplified it from the original works of Kaplan (1964), as well as adding language that is used in other similar models.

![Figure 1.1: A visual representation of Babbie’s (2004) model of conception and conceptualization.](image)

Conceptualizations of rural have been created, and often take the form of a definition in the academic context. Conceptualizations or definitions of rural in academia largely fit into four broad categories, which are later referred to as methods or styles of defining rural: descriptive, socio-cultural, rural as a locality and social representations of rural (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). Each method takes the conceptions held by groups or individuals and attempts to translate them into conceptualizations in order to make rural something that can be studied. Academics are not the only group relying on definitions of rural so too are policy makers, political actors and the general public. The
definitions, and conceptualizations of rural are not consistent within groups, or across the groups due to varied experiences and motivations for defining rural.

Trying to conceptualize or define something is not a purely academic exercise, and trying to make it one does disservice to what is being studied (Halfacree, 1993). This idea is echoed from work done by Sayer (1989) who complicated the way we talk about regional geographies. It was concluded that without expressing how the lay discourse of an object impacted the academic discourse, a disservice was being done and a complete understanding was not achieved (Sayer, 1989). This work led to a framework where by phenomenon and the discourses related to those phenomena need to be studied as they relate to a wider society. This is illustrated by Figure 1.2 as found in Halfacree (1993).

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 1.2: The relationship between discourses and objects as illustrated by Halfacree (1993, p. 9).**

Recognizing this need to understand how rural is used and understood by wider society this research brings together understandings, perceptions and uses of rural not
only from academic literature, but also from government policy and programming and residents of one community in South-Western Ontario. Further description of how this is achieved is outlined in the following problem statement and research objectives.

1.1 Problem Statement

The language used to describe communities matters. The classifications impact the perception of the community and those who live there, as well as acting as factors of inclusion or exclusion for various programs and funding opportunities. Community descriptors are often inconsistent conceptions with multiple definitions, which are often not clearly defined or represented. Complicating matters, official definitions stemming from academics and government policy makers are often different from the definitions used by everyday citizens to describe their own or different communities. Of particular issue the simple word, rural. Descriptive definitions, often employed by policy makers, are not always congruent with the definitions of rural the people use to describe themselves and their community. This research aims to compare academic and political definitions of rural in Ontario to the lay discourse of what constitutes rural in a case community.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

This research addresses four research questions. The questions are as follow:
1. How is rural defined in academic literature?

2. How is rural defined by government in the context of South-Western Ontario?

3. How do residents of Ingersoll, Ontario describe and classify their community?

4. How do academic and government and lay discourses of rural compare in the case on Ingersoll, Ontario?

In addressing each of the research questions, this research will fulfill three primary research objectives:

1. Compile a list of rural definitions employed by local and provincial government policies and programming and Statistics Canada.

2. Understand how rural is represented and used in political platforms from the 2018 Ontario provincial election.

3. Examine the lay discourse surrounding community descriptors in Ingersoll, Ontario.

4. Compare academic, political definitions and the lay discourses of rural in Ingersoll, Ontario.

1.3 Organization of Thesis

Each chapter contains valuable information and is necessary to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives as outline above. In total there are six
chapters including the introduction. The remaining five chapters, in order are, literature review, methods, findings, discussion and conclusion. Each chapter serves a unique purpose while still being linked to the rest of the thesis.

The literature review is the next chapter and serves two purposes. The first purpose of the literature review is to understand what has already been written about defining rural and situate this work within the larger context. The second purpose is to build an understanding of the academic discourse of rural that will be relied on as a comparison throughout the discussion chapter. The literature review provides a wealth of information, necessary not only to undertake the project, but is also a necessary finding in the investigation.

Following the literature review is the methods chapter. As the name suggests this chapter outlines all the methods used in this project. All facets of the project are included in this chapter from the ethics process to survey design and implementation, to the final comparison of results and everything in between. This chapter provides information on the processes that were undertaken to create the other chapters within the thesis.

The fourth chapter is the findings chapter. This chapter catalogs and sorts all of the data that was collected, with the exception of the academic literature, which is contained in the literature review. This chapter is sorted by source of data beginning...
with policies and programming, followed by political platforms and finally the survey. The data presented in this chapter was obtained by following the methods outlined in the previous chapter and aims to meet the objectives outline in the introduction.

After presenting the findings a discussion of what was found occurs in chapter five. The discussion focuses on comparing each of the discourses of rural found through the investigation. First the academic and political discourse will be compared, followed by academic and lay and finally the political and lay discourses of rural.

The final chapter is the conclusion. The conclusion recounts each of the previous chapters while also summarizing what was learned. The conclusion addresses each of the research questions and objectives that were put forth in the introduction. The conclusion will also outline questions that have arisen that could not be answered and require future research. Each chapter in this thesis is connected and required in order to fully understand the political, academic and lay discourse of rural in Ingersoll, Ontario.
2 Literature Review

There are many different ways to define 'rural', each with strengths and weaknesses. Prior to examining the possible definitions or means of defining rural, an argument must be made for its relevance and necessity. The literature is a theater of great debate on this topic with disagreement coming from many disciplines concerned with the study of rural. The debate within the literature does not end with the need for rural, but continues on as there are many different methods for trying to create a definition. Each of the broad methods for creating a definition have strengths and weaknesses, that have been supported, and criticized by many. The differing methods of creating definitions have reached different levels of popularity and this is evident in this review based on the number of different authors employing each approach. The literature examined in this review is all published in English and is predominantly from Canada, the United States, and Europe. One article from India was also included.

2.1 The Need to Define Rural

While the term seems to permeate everyday life for many, and many are able to tell you what rural means to them, there exists debate in academia regarding the need for a definition at all. Pandey (2003) suggests creating a single all-inclusive definition has been seen as a fruitless endeavour, as it is not possible to include the great diversity that is represented by rural. Hoggart (1990) goes further indicating that the
diversity and inconsistency in rural areas is such that the creation or attempt to create a definition leads to confusion and overall inhibits the understanding of what rural is and entails. There exist grounds to dismiss the need for a definition based on the diversity within observed rural areas. The argument against a definition of rural gains traction when comparing rural to urban areas as well. In looking at both rural and urban areas, and their people Copp (1972) suggests that there is no difference between the two and that random sampling in either location could lead to the same results for many research activities. Harrington & O’Donoghue (1998) have supported this notion claiming that rural has no explanatory significance and it is imperative to question the very need to distinguish rural spaces from any other space. The historical separation of rural and urban, for some, rested in a division of labour and economic activities, which no longer exists (Smith, 1984 cited in Halfacree, 1993). Friedland (2002) supports this concept indicating that rural has no place in modern research in the USA and efforts should instead be focused on agriculture. For reasons such as this, Cloke (1985) indicates that any definition of rural would have temporal element and would require change and updating over time if it is to be effective. This quagmire of diversity within rural and the similarity between urban and rural has led to terminology impacting and interfering with our research and analysis (Copp, 1972). The literature provides a robust argument for not defining rural, whether because it is impossible to do a good job or because it is simply unnecessary. However, all do not share this belief.
While the literature against a definition is robust, so too is the argument for the need of a definition of rural. The literature provides two major arguments for a definition of rural. The first argument revolves around the creation of policy. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2015) a usable classification for rural areas is essential to the creation of policy. The argument is that in order to make rural policy you first need to know what rural is, where it exists and what the policy needs are (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015). The definition needs to be diverse enough to capture the varied rural landscapes and lives that exist around the world in order to create effective holistic rural policy (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006, 2015). Many existing policy solutions already rely on defining rural, such as postal services, economic development, environmental protection (Harrington & O'Donoghue, 1998), healthcare, resource allocation (Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010), Common Agricultural Policy reform and the Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économique Rurale program (Johansen & Nielsen, 2012). The definitions as used in these policies have implications for the flow of services and resources impacting people (Hay, 1995). Based on these real-world impacts Harrington & O'Donoghue (1998) go as far as to say that there is a need for more and more sensitive means to define and classify the rural. The policies rely on a definition, but so to do policy makers. A definition can allow policy makers and researchers to understand the context they are working in, even without a substantial
rural background (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015). A definition also allows for better comparison and evaluation by planners and local authorities (Johansen & Nielsen, 2012). According to the literature a definition of rural is essential to policy (Harrington & O'Donoghue, 1998; Hay, 1995; Johansen & Nielsen, 2012; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006, 2015; Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010). The second area that is demonstrated to benefit from a definition of rural is research. In order to conduct consistent research and comparisons, it is necessary to have a comparable definition or index for measuring rurality (Leduc, 1997). The importance of both rural policy and rural research is supported by literature (Cloke, 1985; Leduc, 1997; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006, 2015, Woods, 2005). It is pointed out that a quarter of the population in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries live in predominantly rural areas, and without a definition of rural it is necessary to pick up the remainder after defining urban, which is not sufficient as it is often not representative of the modern rural economy (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015). There exist arguments both for and against the creation or use of a definition of rural. Complicating matters, should you decide a definition is necessary, another much larger body of literature shows no shortage of options.

Part of the reason so many options for defining rural exist is the interdisciplinary nature of the discussion. Evidence of the interdisciplinary nature comes from the variety
of journals in which the articles for this literature review are published. Journals in this review include Journal of Rural Studies, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, Rural Sociology, International Journal of Policy and Administration, Land Use Policy, Social Medicine and Science, Sociological Bulletin, Gender, Place and Culture, Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine and Sociological Review, among others. The journals listed above include interdisciplinary journals such as the Journal of Rural Studies which includes articles from disciplines such as Geography, Sociology, Planning, Economics and Agriculture. There are also discipline specific journals from Sociology, Geography, Medicine and Policy.

2.2 Approaches to Defining Rural

Within the literature several different types or approaches to defining rural have been used, each with strengths and weaknesses. Halfacree (1993) and Woods (2005) support four broad categories, methods or styles for defining rural. The four categories they espouse are descriptive, socio-cultural, rural as a locality and rural as a social representation (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). While they are not all represented equally in the literature they all have a place in this review. This system of sorting definitions is the only method that was uncovered in the process of this literature review, and will be used as a means of organizing the literature. The primary issue with using this system is that Halfacree (1993) employed the categories as a means to illustrate
that social representation was a superior method to define rural and this may impart some bias. Woods (2005) employed the same categories simply as a means to organize the definitions without suggesting any one was superior. It should also be noted that not all proposed definitions fit easily in one method. For example, Cloke (1985) proposed a three-pronged definition that draws on elements from each of the methods outlined here.

2.2.1 Descriptive Definitions

Descriptive definitions rely on the use of socio-spatial characteristics to differentiate rural areas from others (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). The discussion around descriptive definitions is the most prevalent, with many who choose to employ them (du Plessis, Beshiri, Bollman, & Clemenson, 2001; Harrington & O’Donoghue, 1998; Johansen & Nielsen, 2012; Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010) and those who believe they are inadequate (Cloke, 1985; Halfacree, 1993). There also exists great diversity of descriptive definitions. In some cases a simple dichotomy is leveraged to define rural where everything that is not urban is rural (Cloke, 1985; Reimer & Bollman, 2009). This negative approach to definition is seen by some as suggesting that rural has no characteristics of its own, and lacks insight into rural realities (Cloke, 1985). With the creation of the Journal of Rural Studies, Cloke (1985) is quick to point out that rural can be defined positively and need not rely on the leftovers. This positivist approach is
visible in other dichotomous attempts to define rural. The most prevalent and widely used definitions of rural use measures of density and distance (Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010; Reimer & Bollman, 2009). The reliance of distance and destiny has been supported by factorial analysis, as the primary correlations between various rural areas (Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010). Another type of dichotomy looked to describe rural based on social indicators and stemmed largely from theoretical work with differences in urban and rural societies by authors such as Tönnies introducing *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, which translates to Community and Society, in 1952 (Cloke, 1985).

While satisfying those seeking a positivist definition these dichotomy definitions were not without criticism. Dichotomies do not account for variation within rural, labelling all rural areas the same. To overcome this problem and allow for variability scholars turned to indices to define rural and rurality (Cloke, 1985; Harrington & O'Donoghue, 1998). In some cases, one index was not sufficient and multiple indices were applied in conjunction for a comprehensive view of rural (Harrington & O'Donoghue, 1998). It has been stated however, that even with the use of indices it is essential to have robust and diverse indicators in order to represent the reality of rural (Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010). Primarily density and distance are cornerstones of a rurality index, however, other factors have been included such as number of second home dwellings, age of the population (Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010), household amenities, commuting patterns, and gender of population (Harrington & O'Donoghue, 1998). The definitions of
rural, as presented, largely concern themselves with labelling areas or people as rural. One criticism of many of the previously included methods is a lack of individuality in the methods (Mao, Stacciarini, Smith, & Wiens, 2015). For many applied methods measuring rurality at an individual level maybe more appropriate, and because people are mobile, the mobility and interaction with various geographies should be considered (Mao et al., 2015). It has subsequently been proposed that another layer be added to many definitions, measuring the amount of time individuals spend in different locations, creating another element to be considered in rurality (Mao et al., 2015).

Descriptive definitions come in many forms, as has already been indicated. Further diversity can be found in the literature in the way that concepts such as distance and density are defined, and what geographical land unit is most appropriate. The sheer diversity can be seen in Canada as at least six different descriptive definitions exist (du Plessis et al., 2001). The differences in definition stem from the scale of the geography selected to be classified as rural, or not (du Plessis et al., 2001). This issue is not exclusive to Canada. In a European context it has been suggested that it is most appropriate to apply rural to the smallest land unit with reliable consistent data (Johansen & Nielsen, 2012). It has also been indicated that in some cases it is more important to be able to classify the region a community is located within, than any one of the individual communities that make up the region (Reimer & Bollman, 2009). Others believe that the selection of the territorial unit should reflect the motivations, or reason
for trying to define rural (Reimer & Bollman, 2009). This leads to different units of measure in different nations and leads to great variation in national and international definitions of rural (Cloke, 1985; Johansen & Nielsen, 2012).

The concept of distance also has variability within the literature. Distance is often reduced to an economic factor in defining rurality (Reimer & Bollman, 2009). However, distance does not always mean the same thing. For some, distance is measured relative to areas with larger population densities, as a cost of distance (Reimer & Bollman, 2009). For others, distance needs to reflect peoples willingness to travel, regardless of the measured distance (Johansen & Nielsen, 2012). In some cases, distance is measured to particular services such as specialized health care providers (Leduc, 1997).

The land unit and distance are not the only point of contention, so too is how people are included. Population has largely been included in definition through population density (Cloke, 1985; du Plessis et al., 2001; Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010; Reimer & Bollman, 2009; Woods, 2005), but other methods have also been used. In some instances, rather than density, a simple population is used though this has been widely criticized as lacking the necessary nuance or context (Woods, 2005). In some cases density or population is referring to a specific group such as the elderly (Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010) or doctors (Leduc, 1997). Johansen and Nielsen
(2012) note that it is not necessary or even favourable to use population, but rather, use type of land cover, that would be related to population, as a mainstay of the definition. This concept is supported by Cloke (1985) who suggested that any definition of rural include, small settlements with few buildings, open land cover, and expansive landscapes, used for agriculture or forestry within recent history. While there is great diversity and debate within descriptive definitions, there also exists outright critiques.

Descriptive definitions have been criticized for three key reasons. Descriptive definitions have been trying to describe a preconceived rural and therefore the researcher has great impact, and bias on the definition, if it can be considered a definition at all (Cloke, 1985; Halfacree, 1993). There is also a suite of methodological limitations, and a lack of qualitative approaches (Cloke, 1985; Halfacree, 1993; Prieto-Lara & Ocaña-Riola, 2010). Limitations, particularly for the use of indices, include methodological limitations, technical limitations, and human limitations (Harrington & O’Donoghue, 1998). It is also said that descriptive definitions only have the power to measure the rurality of one location compared to another, and not truly define anything (Harrington & O’Donoghue, 1998). A final argument, against many descriptive definitions, is that they are largely application or situation specific and are not appropriate as a wide-reaching definition of rural (Halfacree, 1993). Even the creators of rural definitions have suggested that their definitions seek to fill a practical void and do nothing to end the theoretical debate around rural (Johansen & Nielsen, 2012).
2.2.2 Socio-Cultural Definitions

Socio-cultural definitions, in turn, are not concerned with area, but rather defining the people, customs, traditions, and actions of rural societies (Woods, 2005). Halfacree (1993) indicates socio-cultural definitions rely on the assumption that there is a distinct social or cultural element to rural. Hoggart and Buller (1987) stated that characteristics such as density or distance of populations impacted human behaviour and action (as cited in Halfacree, 1993). One hallmark of socio-cultural definitions is a perception that rural and urban are differentiated by a reliance on the land and environment in rural areas (Cloke, 1985). In the introductory writings for the Journal of Rural Studies, Cloke (1985) goes as far as stating that the behavioural tendencies of individuals in rural places be included in any definition. It was also stated that a strong cohesive identity and a respect for the environment is integral to the social make up of any area defined as rural (Cloke, 1985). The dichotomy of society and community as described by Tönnies, and modified or re-presented by many others, are definitions that describe the local society of rural areas (Cloke, 1985).

Congruent with the socio-cultural definition is the rural idyll that is often associated with childhood and is written about predominantly in the United Kingdom. The rural idyll has been used to describe an area and social structure that is ideal for experiencing childhood (Jones, 1999; Tyrrell & Harmer, 2015). This childhood
experience is full of actions in nature, outdoors, access to green space, strong companionship, and a relative freedom from adult supervision (Jones, 1999). This image of childhood has come to represent rural, however, it is not the same for all individuals (Jones, 1999; Tyrrell & Harmer, 2015). Youth themselves describe rural areas and the people as friendlier, less likely to commit crimes, and a laid back lifestyle (Tyrrell & Harmer, 2015). Female youths who experience and immerse themselves in the activities of a rural idyll are often identified as tomboys, and can be limited as a female to access and live the rural idyll (Jones, 1999). It further pressured females to fit in and not express themselves (Tyrrell & Harmer, 2015). An interesting revelation was a tendency for rural dwellers to reinforce a rural idyll, even if they did not truly believe that it existed. Through interviews, youth who moved from urban areas to rural areas always described the rural idyll as a great place to grow up, even while highlighting so many negative or counter arguments (Tyrrell & Harmer, 2015).

The rural idyll does not only apply to children and childhood and is highlighted in other works as well. One author points out that the rural idyll, as is often imagined, displays an imbalance of power (Shucksmith, 2018). This imbalance can be traced back to the origins of the rural idyll coming from an ‘arm chair countryside’ or how rural is envisioned by a bourgeois imagination of rural (Bell, 2006). The argument is that the idyll is only experienced by some members of the community while others are left behind unable to access the advantages some people see in a rural setting (Shucksmith,
A middle class rural citizen may experience a connection to nature and neighbourly community outside of the city creating the image of a rural idyll, however, in the same community others are caught in a cycle of poverty unable to access the idyll lifestyle that is so often imagined (Shucksmith, 2018). This idea that the rural idyll is not the same for everyone was also described by Bell (2006). The rural idyll is not only perceived differently, but, it can be portrayed differently (Bell, 2006). The idyll portrayed for tourism looks different than an idyll that is described by those with agricultural interests (Bell, 2006). Shucksmith (2018) tries to move the idyll narrative to a method of utopia and imagining what a future rural place could become. A rural idyll can be used to imagine what a good future would look like and then in turn provide a path to an improved future for a community (Shucksmith, 2018). This examination of the rural idyll introduces socio-cultural characteristics of poverty and power imbalances to a potential definition of rural.

The work with the rural idyll demonstrated that not all individuals were impacted by the rural landscape in the same way. Socio-cultural definitions also rely on geographical or environmental determinism, which has fallen out of favour and been problematized due to debates around how space and society interact (Halfacree, 1993). Further debate emerges as many believe that rural is a spatial definition, a location and not the actions or culture of the people who live there (du Plessis et al., 2001; Reimer &
Bollman, 2009). The argument questions what a definition is trying to accomplish, is it identifying a location or is it describing what people do (Reimer & Bollman, 2009)?

2.2.3 Rural as a Locality

The third category of rural definitions, rural as a locality, defines rural as a particular locality with structures that are inherently rural (Woods, 2005). Various structures have been proposed as quintessentially rural such as agriculture, collective consumption, or particular types of consumption, however, it has been found that these structures are rarely specific to rural and may also be found in urban areas (Halfacree, 1993). Treating rural as a locality requires researchers to identify structures that are rural, and only rural, completely absent from urban areas (Hoggart, 1990).

As previously noted, Friedland (2002) supports the notion that rural is a locality where agriculture takes place in the United States. He goes as far as to suggest that agriculture research can replace rural research as it is the economic mainstay of traditional rural areas (Friedland, 2002). It should be noted, that while agriculture is often indicated as a rural activity (Bealer, Willits, & Kuvlesky, 1965; Friedland, 2002; Johansen & Nielsen, 2012), the diversity of rural includes a much larger physical and economic landscape (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015). Friedland (2002) also complicates his own suggestion that rural is synonymous with agriculture when he questions when does agriculture become industry, an urban
activity? Halfacree (1993) adds another layer by questioning if agriculture can take place in an urban setting, and therefore is not a rural structure. Halfacree (1993) goes further, suggesting that an absolute rural structure does not exist, so a rural locality cannot exist in the truest sense.

2.2.4 Social Representations of Rural

Social representation, the final category, tries to define rural based on the experiences and interpretations of individuals who experience and consider themselves to be rural (Halfacree, 1993). The social and physical landscape that people engage with and experience impacts how they view, define and experience rural (Halfacree, 1993). Social representation finds support from those who believe that other definitions of rural are too rigid and are not representative of the reality of rural lives and relationships (Murdoch & Pratt, 1993). Social representation relies on everyday people drawing conclusions from their own daily lives, rather than using scientific methods (Halfacree, 1993). This element of social representation branches into specific fields as well. Rourke (1997) criticizes the use of descriptive indices for research in rural medicine as they do little to explain or provide context for the day-to-day realities of rural medicine and the needs of the doctors and medical staff. He went further, claiming that a rural doctor will know if they have a rural practice or not, regardless of what other definitions may say about him, his practice or his clients (Rourke, 1997). In the year
previous, Wooton (1996) argued that the voice of rural doctors was being left out of the definition discussion and they were necessary. Work with the rural idyll and childhood also relied on elements from the social representation of rural. The use of large scale surveys and interviews tried to piece together a social representation of what it meant to be rural as a youth living in Scotland (Glendinning, Nuttall, Hendry, Kloep, & Wood, 2003). While certain trends did emerge, there was great diversity making it difficult to come to a definition, even in a relatively homogenous group, sharing a geographical location (Glendinning et al., 2003). It was also found that some elements were consistent in both rural and urban dwellers, making researchers question if they were finding a truly rural representation (Glendinning et al., 2003). This difficulty in finding a truly rural representation was also pointed out by Halfacree (1993). The intersectionality of individuals, who all have different experiences, desires, ambitions, and outlooks impacts how rural is experienced, lived, described and defined (Glendinning et al., 2003). As illustrated social representation is difficult to define, it is also incredibly difficult to use in a practical and meaningful way (Halfacree, 1993). A further limitation of social representation is that while many people have different ideas of rural, others have not given it thought or consideration and are not able to provide a meaningful definition of what rural means to them (Halfacree, 1993). In addition, like socio-cultural definitions and rural as a locality it finds itself in the debate of whether rural is a location or a function of the social make-up (Reimer & Bollman, 2009).
2.2.5 Summary

Within the literature there are many debates and viewpoints relating to defining rural. There is, first, debate around the need and relevancy of having a definition at all. If there is to be a definition, then there is great debate about what constitutes a definition and how it should be constructed. Some common trends have emerged, while even the most prevalent methods or idea are not without criticism or complications. Faced with so many options it is not difficult to see why some, such as du Plessis, Beshiri and Bollman (2001), suggest using different definitions as the situation and available data dictate. Above all it is also important to remember that differing definitions of rural will include different areas, different number of people, and different people, having impacts for real world uses of the term (du Plessis et al., 2001). The definition has formally been in debate for 90 years (Halfacree, 1993) and the difficulty and diversity in creating a definition (Cloke, 1985) suggests that the debate is far from over and will continue to evolve.

Moving forward there are likely many options, depending where individuals find themselves within the larger debates. I would suggest, that you need to understand why you are seeking to define rural in order to decide how it should be defined. In my opinion the current state of the discussion is too clouded to utilize one method with no regard for the others. Research around definitions should look to compare the lands,
people and structures that are captured by varied definitions in an effort to find the differences and similarities between the four major methods of defining rural and within the methods themselves. Of particular personal interest is where the social representation of rural differs from other definitions and how people’s own perceptions of their situation may change if they were presented with alternatives. Seeking to understand the social representation of rural and what rural people think defines rural, may add an interesting layer to future definitions of rural or only lead to a more diverse and debated landscape of definitions.

The diversity in the academic literature leads to more questions than answers, as is often the case. With so many possible means of defining rural and four styles of doing so it is clear that an individual’s perception of rural is likely not the same as their neighbor. This is the basis for this investigation. How do residents of Ingersoll, Ontario define and conceptualize rural? How does this compare to the definitions that are outlined in the academic literature? How do the definitions in policy and programming compare to both the lay and academic discourses? This thesis will attempt to answers these questions. The following chapter contains the methods that were followed to answer these questions, while the following chapters outline the findings, discussion and conclusions.
3 Methods

This chapter focuses on the methods employed at all stages of completing this thesis. It begins with a discussion of the ethics process that took place prior to engaging with any members of the public. Next the site selection process and criteria are presented followed by a description of Ingersoll as the selected community. The following sections address the methods used in data collection and the subsequent analysis of the data. Data collection was conducted through a survey and multiple levels of content analysis. Analysis of data was conducted for each data source with the methods included alongside the methods of collection.

3.1 Ethics

This research project was reviewed by the research ethics board (REB) at the University of Guelph to ensure compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. The REB reference number for this project is 17-10-017. The process for submission to the REB began on October 2, 2017, with the initial submission of documents on October 12, 2017. The REB reviewed the submission and provided comments, which were received on October 30, 2017. The documents were edited to reflect the comments received and resubmitted on December 13, 2017. The research initiative received final ethics clearance on February 27, 2018. The ethics certificate for the project can be found in Appendix 1. Primary data collection via survey
was unable to begin until ethics approval was granted. The survey was opened online within hours of receiving approval.

3.2 Case Site: Ingersoll Ontario

Case selection, and understanding the selected community, is important to this research initiative. Great care was taken selecting a community according to preset criteria as described below. In addition to outlining how Ingersoll was selected, this section also provides a community profile to help understand the characteristics of Ingersoll. The community is critical to the data collection, analysis and interpretation of results. Rigour was taken in selecting a community and understanding the context of the site.

3.2.1 Site Selection

When conducting research in a community on community perceptions, the selection of the case is important. Several criteria were set in order to ensure that the selected case would be appropriate for this investigation. The criteria included location, size, and growth trends.

For this research, only cases in Southern Ontario were considered. This geographic focus was to ensure that the policy and programming of Ontario were applicable and to scope the content analysis to Ontario. Limiting the search to Southern
Ontario also allowed for site visits to the community given other constraints such as funding and time. Within Southern Ontario many potential communities exist, and further criteria were needed to narrow the search.

The case for this research needed to be of contested rurality in formal definitions. The selected case needed to not qualify as a rural area (under 1,000) or rural small town (under 10,000) on the prototypical ‘rural’ end of the spectrum. While these criteria were restrictions the case community should be as close to these definitions as possible. To meet these criteria potential cases were limited to Census Agglomerations. Ensuring the selected case is of contested rurality is essential to this research initiative seeking to explore how the lay discourse of rurality intersects more formal academic and political discourses.

While current size was a consideration, the change in population was also a criterion. For this research the selected case community was to be growing as indicated by population change from the 2011 to 2016 Census of Population. An element of change was required to allow the research to explore if the length of residency in a community impacted the responses in the survey. Growth was included as it indicates that the community is moving away from rural by many descriptive definitions yet had potential to have qualified for those definitions recently.
All of the criteria lead to the selection of Ingersoll as the case for this research initiative. Ingersoll is the smallest still growing census agglomeration in Ontario. As a census agglomeration Ingersoll does not qualify as a rural area, nor rural and small town and it was shown to be growing from the 2011 to the 2016 census. While Ingersoll was the smallest still growing census agglomeration other communities that were considered include Elliot Lake, Hawkesbury, Kenora, and Tillsonburg. These communities make up the five smallest census agglomerations in Ontario alongside Ingersoll. While Elliot Lake and Hawkesbury are smaller than Ingersoll with populations of 10,741 and 11,974 respectively, they showed a population decline from 2011 to 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2018). Kenora and Tillsonburg are both larger than Ingersoll with populations of 15,096 and 15,872 respectively therefore resulting in the selection of Ingersoll.

3.2.2 Community Profile

Ingersoll, Ontario is a community located along Highway 401 in Oxford County† and began as a small farming community in 1793 (Town of Ingersoll, 2018a). Ingersoll has a population of 12,757, accounting for a 5% increase from 2011 to 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2018). Oxford County is formally named the County of Oxford, however due to the nature of this investigation the colloquial Oxford County will be used instead. There are references however to official documents that use the County of Oxford therefore resulting in its use at times. It is important to remember that they are the same place.

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Canada, 2017c). The population density for the community is 1,000.7 people per square kilometer (Statistics Canada, 2017c). In comparison Oxford County has a population of 110,862 and a density of 54.4 people per square kilometer (Statistics Canada, 2017d). Ingersoll has a much denser population than the County as a whole, suggesting there are large portions of Oxford County with a much smaller population density. A population pyramid is included in figure 3.1 depicting the population breakdown in Ingersoll, overlaid on a population pyramid of Oxford County.

![Population Pyramid for Ingersoll and Oxford County](image)

**Figure 3.1: Population Pyramid for Ingersoll and Oxford County (Statistics Canada, 2017a)**

Ingersoll's economy is largely based on manufacturing, followed by healthcare and social assistance and retail trade according to the North American Industry
Classification System (NAICS) (Statistics Canada, 2017c). Ingersoll is the home to the Cami Assembly Plant, a General Motors vehicles assembly plant and one of only eight auto assembly plants in Canada (Town of Ingersoll, 2018a). The Cami Assembly Plant employs 2,608 individuals (General Motors, n.d.). In addition to the Cami Assembly Plant, Oxford County is home to a Toyota Assembly Plant in Woodstock employing an additional 2,400 individuals (TMMC, 2018). Additionally over 250 businesses are employing 8,000 individuals in the town (Town of Ingersoll, 2018a). Table 3.1 outlines the breakdown of the labour force population by NAICS code. The median income of households in Ingersoll is $74,103 (Statistics Canada, 2017c). Comparatively the median income for Oxford County as a whole is $72,284 (Statistics Canada, 2017a).
Table 3.1: Summary of employment in Ingersoll by NAICS code (Statistics Canada, 2017a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS Category</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>% Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 – Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 - Utilities</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 - Construction</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-33 - Manufacturing</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-45 – Retail Trade</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48-46 – Transportation and warehousing</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – Information and cultural industries</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 – Finance and insurance</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 – Real estate and housing</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54- Professional, scientific and technical services</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – Management of companies and enterprises</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 – Administrative support, waste management and remediation services</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 – Educational services</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62 – Healthcare and social assistance</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 – Arts, entertainment and recreation</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72 – Accommodation and food services</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 – Other services</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 – Public administration</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ingersoll is home to various festivals and events throughout the year. Events include the Canterbury Folk Festival, Harvest Festival and the Festival of Lights among others (Town of Ingersoll, 2016). In addition to special events Ingersoll has an arena, community centre featuring fitness facilities, swimming pool and sports courts, outdoor splash pad, soccer pitches, baseball fields, a skate park, and the Fusion Youth Centre (Town of Ingersoll, 2018b). Ingersoll also has several maintained parks and trails (Town
of Ingersoll, 2018b). Ingersoll is also home to a live theatre, museums and an arts centre (Town of Ingersoll, 2016). Throughout the year Ingersoll provides a range of options for entertainment and recreation within the town.

Ingersoll is home to several education institutions. Ingersoll has three public elementary schools, one Catholic elementary school, and a Montessori primary school (Town of Ingersoll, 2014). At the secondary level Ingersoll has one public high school, and no Catholic high school (Town of Ingersoll, 2014). The town is also home to a Conestoga College Skills Centre, the only post-secondary institution (Town of Ingersoll, 2014). Education can also extend beyond the classroom. In conjunction with the County of Oxford Ingersoll has an Oxford County Library Branch (County of Oxford, 2016). Ingersoll is a place where people work, play and go to school located in Oxford County.

In addition to the physical factors that make Ingersoll, it is also shaped by current events. Currently Ingersoll, and the surrounding communities, are being impacted by a proposed landfill causing many residents to rally together against the proposal (Comiskey, 2018). The landfill is a common discussion topic on the local Facebook groups, as well as appearing in survey responses in this study. A map of Ingersoll’s location in Oxford County and within Ontario has been included on the following page in figure 3.2.
3.3 Survey Design

An online survey was used in order to understand what Ingersoll, Ontario residents thought about their community and how they conceptualized rural. A complete copy of the survey, as it appeared to participants, is included in Appendix 2. The online survey was chosen as a method in this investigation for various reasons, and design of the survey instrument was intentional and given great thought in order to be useful. A complete census of the residents of Ingersoll would have yielded the most accurate and robust results, however, given financial and temporal limitations this was not possible. A
sample survey was selected as a method, as a survey is rarely used to draw conclusions about the sample alone, but rather to understand the larger population the sample is drawn from (Babbie, 1990). While a census was not possible the research would benefit from a large sample size, also lending itself to a survey which allowed for a wide range of participants compared to other research methods which may seek more in depth responses from less people (Babbie, 1990). The survey instrument also bears low financial cost and can be carried out quickly as was required by this investigation (Babbie, 1990). Choosing the survey as a primary method was intentional and so too was the design of the survey.

When surveys are designed poorly they can introduce errors in the data. When designing the survey care was given to avoid the many pitfalls of survey design as outlined by Babbie (1990), making items clear, ensure competency, be relevant, employ short items, avoid negative items and avoid biased terms. The survey in itself was short including only ten questions, one of which related to informed consent. The questions were written in clear plain English and broken down where necessary to avoid double-barreled questions. The short nature of the survey ensured that all questions were relevant. In the design process several irrelevant, or less relevant, questions were removed. While this increased the quality of the survey, it was also hoped that a short survey would encourage participation.
The ordering of the questions was also intentional. In the survey it was important the people were using their own conception of rural and reflected on their community with as little bias being imparted by the researcher as possible. The term 'rural' does not appear in the survey until the fifth question, in an effort to not alter the responses of the earlier questions. While this effort was made it is possible it did not have the desired effect for two primary reasons. The first is that the online survey instrument allowed respondents to return to earlier responses and alter them should they wish. It is possible that respondents went back and altered their answers after being asked about rurality in their community. Second, the project had a background document outlining the purpose and relevancy of the project for those who were interested. The background document was shared publicly and was available to everyone who completed the survey, if they chose to access it. This background document discussed the meaning of rural and what implications it may have. The responses of those who read the background document may have been impacted by the information they found. Appendix 1 includes a copy of the background document.

The survey was created using the online Qualtrics suite of software through a license provided to students of the University of Guelph. Utilization of Qualtrics allowed for dissemination of the survey remotely as outlined in the following section, as well as storing all the data in digital format for analysis. The online platform also allowed for immediate distribution to a variety of stakeholders. A paper or phone survey would
require utilizing a slower method of dissemination and collection of completed surveys. It would also require the collected data to be transferred to a digital format manually. Further a phone or in person survey would also take time to administer. The use of an online survey had less time restrictions than alternative methods. While an online survey was faster it was not without drawbacks. One such drawback was that individuals could only complete surveys with Internet access. It also meant there was no means to accurately gauge how many individuals received or were aware of the survey.

3.3.1 Participant Recruitment

Formal participant recruitment was conducted entirely via the Internet with some secondary recruitment coming via word of mouth. The residents of Ingersoll, and potentially others, have organized themselves into two Facebook groups: Your Voice Ingersoll (https://www.facebook.com/groups/yourvoiceingersoll/) and Ingersoll Unplugged (https://www.facebook.com/groups/379211275611168/). According to the About page of the ‘Your Voice Ingersoll Group’ the group is a place for local organizations to advertise, and share news; second it is a place for individuals to share thoughts, comments and criticism on relevant events or issues (Your Voice Ingersoll, 2018). In contrast ‘Ingersoll Unplugged’ is a group for anyone who does not agree with the level of censoring that occurs in ‘Your Voice Ingersoll’ by the page administration and welcomes all content without moderation (Ingersoll Unplugged, 2018). Upon receiving ethics approval, on February 27, 2018, a hyperlink to the survey was posted to
both Facebook groups along with an image of the background document for all to see. One post was created in each group at 6:45 pm. In addition to my own posts in the groups, two family members created posts on their pages inviting individuals to complete the survey.

In addition to sharing the survey on Facebook, the survey was sent to groups of authority within Ingersoll and Oxford County, inviting them to complete the survey themselves but also to share the survey to be completed by others. Emails with the survey hyperlink, background document and an invitation to share the survey was sent to Oxford County Planning Department, Ingersoll Chamber of Commerce, Oxford Community Foundation, Ingersoll Department of Economic Development, Mayor Ted Comiskey, Deputy Mayor Fred Freeman and Councilors Michael Bowman, Reagan Franklin, Kristy VanKooten-Bossence, Gord Lesser, and Brian Petrie. It is unknown how many of these groups or individuals completed the survey or passed it along to others.

Following the primary recruitment on Facebook and via email some respondents reached out in person and online to say they had passed the survey onto other interested individuals who may not have been included in the initial dissemination.
### 3.4 Survey Analysis

Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive and cross tabs statistics and compared to multiple benchmarks. The results were compared to other survey respondents, as well as to other sources of rural definitions as found in academic literature, government policies and programming and provincial political platforms. Each question served a purpose and was analyzed to meet this purpose.

Respondents were asked if they believed Ingersoll was rural, or not. Reponses to this question were classified and compared in a crosstabs format based on age, gender and length of residency in the community. The crosstabs were generated using the analysis tools included in the Qualtrics software suite. Once created data was downloaded as excel files to be formatted for inclusion in the final document. The findings from the crosstabs were expressed as total number of respondents, and as percentages in the body of the text. Respondents were asked to justify their responses in an open question. The results were divided into justifications from those believing Ingersoll is rural and those believing it is not rural. The responses were then open coded in NVIVO. The coded responses were used to understand why people believed that Ingersoll was rural or not rural. These themes were then compared to each other and to justifications found in academic literature and political discourse.
The survey results were also used to create three profiles based on coded responses, when respondents were asked to describe their community in five words or phrases. One profile was made up of the coded responses from the total sample, one from coded responses indicating Ingersoll was rural, and one from coded responses of individuals who perceived Ingersoll as not rural. Codes were applied in NVIVO using an open coding system.

Comparisons were also made to secondary sources of data. The survey responses were compared to definitions of rural found in academic literature, policy, programming and political platforms. The comparison includes not only respondent’s classification but also the profiles built through the open survey questions.

3.5 Content Analysis

Content analysis was selected as a method in this research due to its appropriateness in understanding written documents. Content analysis is an appropriate tool when trying to understand documents, or parts of documents that have already been written (Babbie, 2004; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014). Content analysis are particularly useful to understand what is being said, by whom and what they mean by their words (Babbie, 2004; Babbie & Benaquisto, 2014). Content analysis was applied to three separate groups of documents through this investigation.
First content analysis was used to create a literature review encompassing academic journal articles, books and textbooks. The second group of documents analyzed was programming and policy from the Ontario government, the County of Oxford and the federal Census of Population program as presented on their respective websites. The third and final avenue for content analysis was political platforms from the 2018 Ontario provincial election.

3.5.1 Academic Literature

The literature review serves two purposes in this project. First a comprehensive review of the literature provided the background information necessary to plan, propose and carryout this investigation. Second, understanding the academic discourse of rural is necessary to meet the research objectives for this investigation. In order to meet this objective a literature review was preformed of academic and grey literature. Academic literature was searched through Primo using the login credentials provided through the University of Guelph. As such only articles and textbooks available through the University of Guelph were included in the review. The search included only documents available in English due to limitations of the researcher. The initial search was focused on articles from Canada, United States and Europe to ensure relevancy in the Ontario context. An additional article from India was also included.
Literature was first found using simple keyword searches in Primo. Further articles were harvested via mining the citations in each of the articles in a snowball method. The initial search terms were ‘rural’, ‘rurality’, ‘definition’ and ‘define’. The searches created a list of potentially relevant articles which were then read and evaluated for their applicability to this investigation. Those that were deemed to be relevant were re-read and included in the literature review. In addition, to being included, the citations of each article were added to the list of potentially relevant literature to be investigated and possibly included. This process led to books and articles not included in the initial searches to be found and included where appropriate and relevant. The literature review comprised of 22 academic sources. The articles and books stem from the disciplines of rural studies, geography, sociology and medicine.

Using the information found, a literature review was compiled and can be found in Chapter Two.

3.5.2 Government Policy and Program Documents

Content analysis of academic literature was used to understand the academic discourse of rural, similarly content analysis of government policies and programming was used to understand the political discourse, as understood by the current and past governments locally, provincially, and federally. This research has taken a broad approach to defining policy. Policy, in this case, included any decision made by the
government as elected officials, or those appointed, that is for the public (Torjman, 2005). The method for finding relevant policy and programming varied for each level of government that was investigated.

Policy and programming from local government was focused on the County of Oxford and the Town of Ingersoll. A web search was conducted for the term ‘rural’ on both the County of Oxford and the Town of Ingersoll’s website. The search in Oxford County returned 1,240 results, while the town of Ingersoll returned nine. Similarly, the Ontario provincial website was searched using the term ‘rural’. The search returned 884 links within the website. Each of the returned links was investigated for a definition of rural in order to understand how rural is defined and represented by current policy and programs. Only programs and policies that provided a definition of rural were included in the findings and analysis of this thesis.

In order to understand federal definitions of rural two definitions that are used and supported by Statistics Canada were employed. These metrics were chosen, as they are direct definitions of rural, which are not program or policy specific like many others that are employed. The definitions used by Statistics Canada emerging from work done alongside the Census of Population were also essential to the site selection process of this research.
3.5.3 Political Party Election Platforms

This research was conducted during an election in the province of Ontario. On June 7, 2018, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party led by Doug Ford were elected. They ousted the incumbent Ontario Liberal Party and Premiere Kathleen Wynne. Provincial policy and programming at the time of this investigation is a reflection of the conception of rural under the previous Liberal Government. In order to understand a wider range and potentially the future of rural conceptions from the political sphere in Ontario election platforms were an invaluable resource. A content analysis was performed on the platform from each of the major parties in Ontario: the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, the Ontario Liberal Party, the Ontario New Democrat Party and the Green Party of Ontario. In order to perform the content analysis a PDF of each platform was downloaded and searched for the term 'rural', with the exception of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, who only have a web version available. It is assumed that the inclusion of rural indicates that something is meant by rural. Each platform was searched for an explicit definition of what rural means to the party. Additionally, an open coding system was used in order to create a profile of how rural was discussed and referred to in each platform. Using the codes, and the context of the word rural, deductions were made to understand what rural means to each party, based on the contents of their election platform.
3.6 Limitations

As with all research certain limitations exist. Short of a comprehensive census of all residents of Ingersoll it is not possible to fully understand the opinions and experiences of every resident. The data collected in this research aims to create a profile of a case community and includes as many different voices as possible, however this research initiative did not reach a sample size large enough make any statistically relevant claims on the larger population. Due to the nature of the survey only individuals with computer and Internet access were included. This may have excluded certain members of the population who did not have access or did not feel comfortable completing the survey online. Particularly noteworthy is the lack of male participants in the survey. While a total of 70 participants completed the survey only six of those were male. It is unsure why such an uneven gender divide emerged in the sample. The research methods were oriented to both genders equally. Where every individual is different, so too is every community. As a result, this research speaks to the narratives of the 70 survey participants in one case community.

As a researcher, I impart biases into the investigation that while mitigated cannot be eliminated in their entirety. Efforts have been made to limit bias, but it is important to be mindful of its existence. While not a resident of Ingersoll, I grew up in the area, played sports, went to festivals and have many friends and acquaintances in the community.
This may have an impact on who completed the survey, and the amount of time and detail taken when completing the questions. In addition, it should be noted that if I were personally taking this survey I would likely not consider Ingersoll to be rural. This is in part due my knowledge of how rural is defined in Canada and Ontario, often excluding a town such as Ingersoll. Additionally, however, I grew up in an area dominated by agriculture outside of Ingersoll, and Ingersoll is a place I went to access programs and services that were not available in my immediate community, thus making it different from the rural atmosphere where I lived.

This is a brief consideration of limitations that exist in this research. Further discussion of limitations is included in relevant sections and chapters throughout.
4 Findings

In this chapter the findings from the data collection are presented. This research drew information from both primary and secondary sources of data. First the findings of the content analysis of government policy and programing are presented. Followed by the content analysis of political platforms for the 2018 Ontario provincial election. Finally, the results from the survey are presented and explained. This chapter does not include findings from academic literature.

4.1 Content Analysis: Policies and Programming

The analysis of policy and programming took place at three levels of government: county, provincial, and federal. This section begins by looking at local policy, followed by provincial and then finally the federal Statistics Canada. In some cases, clear definitions of rural are found, in other cases it is less clear. In all cases I tried to understand and interpret how rural was being used, defined, and what was meant. Alongside the definition of rural the aim or goal of each program or policy is also included.

4.1.1 County of Oxford Official Plan

The County of Oxford Official Plan was adopted by County Council in 1995 and is the guide for land development within the county and the eight municipalities found
within (County of Oxford, 2018b). Chapter 9.0 of the Official Plan is dedicated to the Town of Ingersoll and does not contain a single use of the word rural. (County of Oxford, 1995). This was a conscious choice and what is and is not considered rural within the County, by the County is described in Chapter 1.0 of the Official Plan. Chapter 1.0 is an introduction to the following chapters, providing background information of the County and definitions among other sections (County of Oxford, 2018b). The first chapter describes the make-up of the County indicating that there are three major urban centres, and 5 rural municipalities that make up Oxford (County of Oxford, 1995). The three urban centres are Woodstock, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll surrounded by the rural municipalities of South-West Oxford, Zorra, East Zorra - Tavistock, Blandford - Blenheim and Norwich Townships (County of Oxford, 1995). Beyond the introduction rural is also found in the term ‘rural clusters’.

Rural clusters are the lowest order of settlement found within the Official Plan (County of Oxford, 1995). They are typified by low density residential development on un-serviced lots as outlined in section 6.1.1 (County of Oxford, 1995). Rural clusters are not found within the borders of the town of Ingersoll, only within the five rural municipalities of South-West Oxford, Zorra, East Zorra - Tavistock, Blandford - Blenheim and Norwich Townships (County of Oxford, 1995). The more recent Community Improvement Plan uses the same language and designations to describe lands and rural in Oxford County (County of Oxford, 2013).
4.1.2 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is a document that is essential to the land use planning system in Ontario. The PPS provides guidance and direction for all land use planning decisions in the province protecting provincial interests and ensuring good planning bettering the life of all Ontarians (Government of Ontario, 2014). The focus on land use planning needs to be remembered when looking at the definitions found within this document, unlike many other definitions the PPS is describing land, not communities. The first definition of rural is for rural areas. The PPS defines rural areas as, “a system of lands within municipalities that may include rural settlement areas, rural lands, prime agricultural areas, natural heritage features and areas, and resource areas” (Government of Ontario, 2014, p.48). Rural lands are further defined as, “lands which are located outside settlement areas and which are outside prime agricultural areas” (Government of Ontario, 2014, p.48). These definitions are applied locally through the aforementioned County of Oxford Official Plan as part of the land use planning system in Ontario.

4.1.3 Rural Economic Development Program

The Rural Economic Development (RED) program of the Government of Ontario aims to provide funding to support projects in rural Ontario that will build the local economy (OMAFRA, 2018b). In the case of the RED program, rural Ontario is defined in
the eligibility requirements as census subdivisions that have a population of less than 100,000 people or have a population density less than 100 people per square kilometer (OMAFRA, 2018c). In order to be approved and accepted by the RED program the proposed project needs to either take place in rural Ontario, or demonstrate how it benefits rural Ontario, as defined by the eligibility criteria (OMAFRA, 2018c).

4.1.4 Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund

The Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) has funding to support the development and renewal of infrastructure in Ontario’s small, rural and northern communities (Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure, 2018b). The OCIF does not differentiate from small, rural or northern communities but rather holds them all to the same eligibility requirement. In order to be considered the municipality must have a population of 100,000 people or less (Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure, 2018a). This definition groups small, rural and northern communities together rather than defining each individually.

4.1.5 Downtown Revitalization Program

As the name suggests the Downtown Revitalization program is designed to improve downtown core regions in rural communities across Ontario and in turn aid the local economy (OMAFRA, 2018a). The Downtown Revitalization program has three criteria that must be met in order to be eligible. The rural community must have a population under 100,000 people, at least 50 commercial enterprises or 70 downtown
structures and the applicants must have completed one other program offered by the Ontario Ministry of Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) (OMAFRA, 2018a). The population limit of 100,000 people is congruent with many of the other programs servicing rural Ontario, while the other criteria appear to be necessary in order to get full value from this program in particular.

4.1.6 Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario

The Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario (CIRRO) is a program from OMAFRA designed to help newcomers settle in rural communities and help maintain a vibrant economy (OMAFRA, 2011). The handbook that is associated with this program has a definition of rural that acknowledges that rural is not an easy term to define, and it can be done using many different methods (OMAFRA, 2011). In the end, however, it is suggested that rural in Ontario means everything outside the major urban areas of Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Kitchener/Waterloo, Windsor and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (OMAFRA, 2011). Windsor is the smallest city included in this list with a population of 329,144 (Statistics Canada, 2018).

4.1.7 Northern and Rural Recruitment and Retention Initiative

The Northern and Rural Recruitment and Retention Initiative (NRRRI) was established to attract physicians to communities deemed to be eligible (Ontario Ministry of Health and Longterm Care, 2017). Eligibility in this case is based on a Rurality Index
of Ontario (RIO) developed specifically for this initiative (Ontario Ministry of Health and Longterm Care, 2017). Grants are awarded to physicians of varying amounts based on the index score for communities, the more rural the community the larger the grant is (Ontario Ministry of Health and Longterm Care, 2017). The index combines many factors including population, population density, distance to basic referral center and distance to advanced referral center which are applied to census subdivisions resulting in a single rurality score for healthcare (Ontario Ministry of Health and Longterm Care, 2017).

4.1.8 Statistics Canada

Statistics Canada collects information on a wide range of topics from across the country for various reasons and programs. One program overseen by Statistics Canada is the Census of Population. Statistics Canada uses various methods of determining what is and is not rural, one of which is defined in the Census Dictionary. In Canada, rural areas, also known as census rural, as it is included in the Census Dictionary, describes areas outside population centers of 1,000 people, or centers with a density of less than 400 people per square kilometer (du Plessis et al., 2001; Statistics Canada, 2017e). In order to determine if a population center meets the criteria data is analyzed as dissemination blocks (Statistics Canada, 2017e). Dissemination blocks are the smallest geographical unit employed in the census program and are blocks completely surrounded by roads, or in some cases by other recognized geographical boundaries.
Rural areas are not the only mode of defining rural used by Statistics Canada. In some cases a definition for rural and small towns is used. Rural and small towns refers to places outside the main commuting zone of a population center of 10,000 people or greater (du Plessis et al., 2001). While rural areas are measured at the smallest possible unit, rural small town is measured at the census subdivision level (du Plessis et al., 2001). Census subdivisions are municipalities or their equivalents as determined by provincial law and are made up of multiple dissemination blocks (du Plessis et al., 2001; Statistics Canada, 2017a). A bulletin released by Statistics Canada recognizes that defining rural is difficult and the definition chosen should reflect the project or problem, however they go on to state that if unsure rural small town is often a good choice (du Plessis et al., 2001). This assertion that rural and small town is a good choice for defining rural in Canada makes its inclusion in this research paramount, even though the Census of Population relies on rural areas more formally. This analysis outlines a variety of means of defining rural and displays how the definition of rural impacts who is counted or not counted in rural populations (du Plessis et al., 2001). The definitions used in this bulletin are all descriptive and come from Canadian sources as well as definitions employed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (du Plessis et al., 2001).
4.2 Content Analysis: Platforms

4.2.1 Ontario Liberal Party

The Ontario Liberal Party released a platform for the 2018 Ontario provincial election titled “The Ontario Liberal Plan for Care and Opportunity”. The platform does not include an explicit definition of what is meant by rural to the party. However, excluding the table of contents and headings, rural appears on 12 separate pages of the document for a total of 44 occurrences. Table 4.1 outlines the codes associated with each of the occurrences within the platform.

Table 4.1: Coded rural references from the Ontario Liberal Platform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Creation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4, 46, 47, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4, 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Driver</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in table 4.1, the most frequent code is services. The platform discussed at great length how services would be improved, or new services would be introduced. A notion that rural areas were lacking services, or were underserviced, was clear. This leads to rural be equated with locations that do not have the services of urban counterparts within the province of Ontario. Following closely behind services is
infrastructure. Infrastructure and services were often found together within the platform. Again, infrastructure was going to be improved through investment and expansion, indicating that rural areas needed this support and lacked appropriate infrastructure.

Job creation in rural areas was also a common theme within the platform. Rural job creation was coded five times indicating that rural areas are lacking meaningful employment for residents. The theme of rural economic development was also found within the platform, adding validity to a desire to an increase of job prospects in rural areas of Ontario, suggesting the economic situation is currently not strong. While only coded two times education is also a concern of the Ontario Liberal Party. The platform called for further funding to improve the state of education in rural Ontario, suggesting that is lagging behind.

The platform contained many negative clues as to what rural means in Ontario there were also some positive elements to be found. The Ontario Liberal Party referenced agriculture quite heavily throughout the platform, with the instances coming in reference to rural specifically, this would suggest that rural is a location where agriculture happens. Second rural areas are regarded as economic drivers, especially in regard to primary resource extraction. Based on the content analysis of the Ontario Liberal Party Platform it would see rural Ontario as lacking services, and infrastructure, poor employment prospects, and low education while also being the heart of agriculture and a resource-based economy. This platform also includes terms such as remote and
Northern Ontario, often in the same passage as rural. This would suggest that a dualism is not being supported and rural and urban are only some of the classifications that exist in Ontario. While not designed to be a definition the way rural is discussed and referred to leads us to a conception of rural being revealed.

4.2.2 Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario

The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario titled their platform “For the People: A Plan for Ontario”. Like the Liberal platform there is not an explicit definition of rural within the platform. Rural occurs two times within the platform. Each occurrence can fit within the codes previously used for the Liberal platform. The Progressive Conservative platform is only available as a web page and therefore does not have page number to indicate the location of each use of the word rural. Table 4.2 outlines the each code and the number of times it was found.

Table 4.2: Coded rural references from the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario Platform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Creation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first place rural appears is a call to expand natural gas into more rural locations and expand the cellular and broadband services. This was coded as infrastructure and services, like many of the cases in the Liberal platform. While there
are fewer examples of rural services and infrastructure that need improving, it suggests that rural areas are lacking services and infrastructure compared to the rest of Ontario. The second instance of the word rural can be coded as economic development and job creation. This section of the platform calls for increased support and funds for economic development in order to create better jobs and attract funding. Much like in the Liberal platform this would suggest that the Progressive Conservative party sees rural as areas that need assistance creating jobs and economic development, as they do not in their current state. Again, this platform does not seek to define rural, but through the language used, as uncovered by coding we can begin to piece together the conception of rural held by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. The platform also makes a distinction between rural and Northern Ontario. While referenced in the same line when outlining plans for greater economic development, they choose to differentiate the two. This differentiation suggests that a dualism is not present and while rural exists so to do other regions within Ontario, outside of urban centers.

4.2.3 Ontario New Democratic Party

The Ontario New Democratic Party named their 2018 provincial election platform “Change for the Better”. Like the other platforms they use the word rural but do not provide a definition for what they are referring. There are 14 occurrences of the word rural, not counting titles and the table of contents, and each use was coded to determine what conception the Ontario New Democratic Party has of rural. The codes
and the number of occurrences is displayed in table 4.3, along with the page numbers each occurrence can be found on.

Table 4.3: Coded rural references from the Ontario New Democratic Party Platform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10, 25, 27, 27, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>76, 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job creation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the other platforms investigated, a lack of services and infrastructure seems to be synonymous with rural in the conception of the Ontario New Democratic Party. Their platform also indicates a need to invest in and support education in rural Ontario to improve the education in these regions though it is only included one time. Economic development and job creation were also only found and coded once. Using what has been written to create a profile from this platform, rural Ontario is an area that lacks services, infrastructure and education while needing assistance to create better jobs and strengthen the economy. This platform also uses terms such as remote and Northern communities when discussing many of the issue related to rural. Using them at the same time suggests they are different from rural communities and therefore more complicated than a simple dualism.
4.2.4 Ontario Green Party

The Ontario Green Party created a platform titled “People Powered Change”. Their platform does not contain the rural, nor does it make mention of remote, or Northern communities. The term urban is used one time, in an image description, not in the body of the text. As rural is not used it is not possible to try and understand how rural is understood by the Ontario Green Party based on their election platform.

4.2.5 Political Platform Summary

While usage of the term ‘rural’ varied from party to party, and was even completely left out of one platform, there are some generalizations that can be made. In all cases rural was described as a place that needed to be fixed. There is a call to improve infrastructure, bring amenities and services, and create jobs. Rarely if ever were rural spaces described as having surplus or bright futures in their current state. It was often difficult to understand what constituted rural in the eyes of each party. While these generalizations can be made it is also important to be aware that this is within the nature of an election platform. Each party is outlining a plan for improvement, impacting the language used.
4.3 Survey Results

The survey results indicate the perceptions of rural based on the residents of Ingersoll, Ontario. Residents of Ingersoll have different lived experiences, and therefore different understandings of what is and is not rural. The survey results allow for some generalizations, but it is also important to recognize the different responses received. It is important to be mindful of the limitations of the survey when interpreting the results.

The online survey received a total of 108 responses when the survey was closed on April 24, 2018. Some responses were removed from the sample, leaving only qualified respondents included in the data presented. Respondents were removed from the survey for two reasons: indicating they were not a resident of Ingersoll or providing a postal code that is not within the town boundaries. The total qualified respondents made a final sample size of 70. The sample size is small and while the distribution by age is similar to the distribution of the population, the genders were not equally represented. Comparing the population pyramid of respondents in figure 4.1 to the population for the entire town found in figure 3.1 show the differences.
Figure 4.1: Population pyramid of survey respondents.

The survey asked respondents if they considered Ingersoll to be rural, in a yes or no question. All 70 of the qualified respondents elected to answer this question. Of the 70 responses 64% (45) consider Ingersoll to be rural and 36% (25) do not consider Ingersoll to be rural. As part of understanding how rural is used and defined in Ingersoll it is important to examine how different subsections of the population responded when asked if they thought that Ingersoll was rural or not rural. The responses were broken down into three categories based on gender, age, and length of residency in Ingersoll. The responses can be compared within their respective categories and to the sample as a whole.
The comparison of genders as shown in table 4.4 suggests gender is not an indicator of whether respondents identify Ingersoll as rural or not. All qualified respondents chose to indicate their gender as either male or female. The male respondents were split with half (3) indicating that they thought Ingersoll was rural and the other half (3) indicating it was not rural. Females, while split, did not do so evenly. Nearly 66% (42) female respondents consider Ingersoll to be rural, while 34% (22) do not consider it to be rural. While it seems females may be more likely to consider Ingersoll to be rural, the small sample of male respondents makes drawing conclusions difficult.

Table 4.4: Crosstab comparison of whether Ingersoll is rural or not based on gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Do you consider Ingersoll to be rural?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45 (64%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparisons made for the different gender can also be made based on age categories. Table 4.5 breaks down the comparison of responses by age. Nearly all respondents shared their age with only one-person objecting. All age categories had individuals consider Ingersoll to be rural, and not consider Ingersoll to be rural with the
exception of the 71+ category which had a single respondent indicating they consider Ingersoll to be rural. Additionally, in all categories the majority of respondents indicted that they consider Ingersoll to be rural, though the ratios differ. Of respondent’s 18-30 years of age 63% (10) consider Ingersoll to be rural, with the remaining 37% (6) not considering Ingersoll to be rural. Respondents 31-40 years of age split 67% (10) considering Ingersoll rural while 33% (5) do not. In the next age category, 41-50 the split is 72% (13) consider Ingersoll rural, while the 28% (5) do not. The closest ratio of rural to not comes in the 51-60 age bracket, with 56% (9) considering Ingersoll rural and 44% (7) not. The final age bracket with more than one respondent, 61-70 years of age, was split 67% (2) considering Ingersoll rural and 33% (1) considering it not rural. The age brackets in the survey lead to a low of 56% (51-60) and high of 72% (41-50) respondents considering Ingersoll to be rural. With this data it appears that age is also not an indicator of whether or not an individual would denote Ingersoll as rural or not.
Table 4.5: Crosstab comparison of whether Ingersoll is rural or not based on age.

Do you consider Ingersoll to be rural?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Cohort</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>10 (63%)</td>
<td>6 (37%)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>13 (72%)</td>
<td>5 (28%)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
<td>7 (44%)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71+</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45 (65%)</td>
<td>24 (35%)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final comparison, displayed in table 4.6, made was the length of residency in Ingersoll and whether or not they consider Ingersoll to be rural. Like the other comparisons each category saw more respondents indicate they consider Ingersoll to be rural, than not. Of those that have been residents of Ingersoll for 0-5 years 79% (11) consider Ingersoll to be rural and 21% (3) do not consider Ingersoll rural. The middle category, 5-10 year residents saw 86% (6) consider Ingersoll rural and 14% (1) consider it not rural. The longtime residents as indicated by the 10+ years category had 57% (28) consider Ingersoll to be rural and 43% (21) not consider it rural.
Table 4.6: Crosstab comparison of whether Ingersoll is rural or not based on length of residency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long have you been a resident of Ingersoll Ontario?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>11 (79%)</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>6 (86%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ Years</td>
<td>28 (57%)</td>
<td>21 (43%)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>45 (64%)</td>
<td>25 (36%)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you consider Ingersoll to be rural?

The 10+ years category is much closer in its ratio of individuals who consider Ingersoll to be rural to not rural and it accounts for a rather large portion of those who do not consider Ingersoll to be rural. Of the 25 respondents who consider Ingersoll not to be rural, 21 have been residents for 10 or more years accounting for 84% of individuals reporting they consider Ingersoll not to be rural.

The differences in groups go beyond simply whether respondents believed Ingersoll to be rural or not rural. Respondents were asked to explain why they believed Ingersoll to be rural, or not rural. The justifications for indicating Ingersoll was not rural were open coded revealing five themes: size, amenities, location, agriculture, and a middle ground. The most common justification was that Ingersoll’s population did not fit that of rural. Respondents cited it as being too big, too dense and a growing population as justification. This theme was referenced and coded 13 times. One respondent was explicit, stating “I consider Ingersoll not to be rural due to the population density to be rural”. The second most common reason was that Ingersoll had more amenities than
are to be expected in a rural community. Respondents suggested Ingersoll was home to shops, a hospital, and various industries, which would not be present if Ingersoll was rural. The next most common justification for not considering Ingersoll to be rural was that it is in fact a middle ground somewhere between rural and urban. This sentiment can be summed up by the following quote; “… I feel that Ingersoll is an urban village with a rural vibe.” A lack of agriculture, or attachment to agriculture, was also used as reasoning for considering Ingersoll to be not rural. This is summed up in one response, “Our town populations and schools, especially teachers, are very disconnected from agriculture”. The final justification that was used is that Ingersoll is not rural is because of its proximity to the 401 highway and the ease of travel to major urban centres. One respondent went as far as describing Ingersoll as the “gateway to Toronto and London”.

Justifications for considering Ingersoll to be rural were coded into six different themes, that were similar to the justifications for Ingersoll being not rural, however, they were polar opposites. The six themes that emerged are agriculture, amenities, size, location, social, and comparison. The most common theme in the justifications was that Ingersoll is rural because of the agricultural base of the surrounding area. This theme was referenced 22 times by respondents. Some pointed to agriculture as a land use, as an economic driver, and one respondent pointed out that it was a valid excuse to miss school for agriculture related purposes. The next most common themes, each being referenced 17 times are size and amenities. While having the same code as
justifications for Ingersoll not being rural the statements were different. Respondents who thought Ingersoll was rural indicated that they thought their community was lacking the amenities or population that were required to be urban. In some cases it was not necessarily amenities that were lacking but the delivery system of those amenities were rural such as small locally owned shops rather than big box stores. Respondents also used comparisons to illustrate why Ingersoll was rural. Comparisons were to real or fictional locations typically larger in population, which were urban, making Ingersoll rural. Comparisons were coded in six instances. In five responses, respondents pointed to social, or behavioral factors that mean Ingersoll is rural such as county music, driving pick up trucks, and having casual dress codes at work. The final theme that was coded is location showing up four times. Ingersoll was seen as far from a large city and close to other rural areas and was therefore considered to be rural.

In addition to being asked if Ingersoll is rural, respondents were also asked to describe their community in five words or phrases to further understand how they see their community. The open-ended question allows for profiles to be built of how Ingersoll is seen by residents. As stated three separate profiles will be created one aggregating all responses received, one for those who considered Ingersoll to be rural and one for those who believed Ingersoll was not rural.

The descriptions of Ingersoll provided in the survey as five words or phrases were coded into themes. In total there were 19 separate themes found among the responses.
In total there were 270 words or phrases used by respondents to describe Ingersoll. The most common theme found in the descriptions was that of friends and family with 72 instances being coded. The friends and family theme includes descriptions that reference Ingersoll being a good place to raise a family, being neighborly, caring, kind, friendly atmosphere among other similar words and phrases. The second most common theme was that Ingersoll was described as small with 51 instances being found. Amenities was the third most referenced theme in the responses. This theme not only included amenities but also services, facilities, and activities that were used to describe the town. The theme was further broken down into two codes, those that were praising the amenities that were present, and those that were stating Ingersoll was lacking amenities, or access to amenities. While 31 descriptors referenced amenities, 20 were coded as lacking amenities and ten were coded as Ingersoll having amenities.

The totals for the remaining codes can be found in table 4.7. In addition to the counts for each code the table has shading to indicate the connotation associated with each of the codes. Red shading indicates a negative connotation, green positive and those left blank are neither positive nor negative.
The majority of respondents indicated that Ingersoll was rural creating an interesting profile of how this group viewed their community of Ingersoll. In total respondents used 201 words or phrases to describe rural. Coding the responses lead to 20 individual codes being assigned some of which were aggregated following themes. The codes reveal how individuals who believe Ingersoll is rural describe Ingersoll. The most common theme was that of friends and family. In total 36 responses described Ingersoll as friendly, family oriented, caring, neighborly, kind or a permutation of such.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Family</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Amenities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landfill</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliquey</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following closely behind was the theme of Ingersoll being small. Descriptions such as quiet, quaint and small were used 32 times. While the majority sees Ingersoll as small, there were five instances of people describing the town as growing or expanding. The third most common theme was that of amenities with 17 total responses. This code was rather broad and included mentions of amenities, services, infrastructure and activities. This theme was broken down further into two separate codes, one indicating a lack of amenities; the other suggesting Ingersoll has a good or appropriate number of amenities. Of the 17 responses referencing amenities ten indicated Ingersoll was lacking amenities and needed more while the remaining seven were satisfied with the services available to them in Ingersoll. All other codes had ten or less instances in the responses, the breakdown of which can be see in table 4.8 along with the shading to indicate positive and negative connotations.
Table 4.8: Breakdown of codes from descriptions of Ingersoll by respondents indicating Ingersoll is rural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Family</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Amenities</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliquey</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The group of respondents who indicated that Ingersoll was non-rural was smaller and lead to 69 words or phrases being used to describe Ingersoll. The responses were sorted into 21 different codes. Table 4.9 displays the count for each of the codes, along with the previously used shading to denote connotation. Friends and family was the most common theme found in the descriptions. In total there were 36 descriptors that were coded under this theme. The second most common theme to appear was that Ingersoll is small with 19 descriptions referencing its small size. Again, the third most common theme was amenities and again the responses were split with some describing Ingersoll as having enough, and others saying there are not enough. In total 14 descriptors referenced amenities with ten suggesting there was a lack of amenities and
the remaining four indicating Ingersoll had a good level of amenities. These top three results directly mimic the top results from those who believed Ingersoll was rural.

Table 4.9: Breakdown of codes from descriptions of Ingersoll by residents indicating Ingersoll is not rural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Family</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking Amenities</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landfill</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the primary focus of the survey was Ingersoll, respondents were also asked to indicate if other communities in Oxford County were rural, not rural or if they were unsure. Table 4.10 contains the responses, indicating how residents of Ingersoll view their neighboring communities. Only Tillsonburg and Woodstock had a majority of respondents indicate they were not rural. Tillsonburg and Woodstock are also the largest communities in Oxford County with populations of 15,872 and 40,902 respectively (Statistics Canada, 2018). The remaining communities are unincorporated.
and part of the other lower tier municipalities. All communities except Bright and Hickson had at least one person indicate they were not rural communities. It is also important to keep in mind that not all respondents were sure if a community was rural or not rural, and there was no opportunity for respondents to indicate why this was their selection. Figure 4.2 includes a map of Oxford County with the communities included in the survey labeled.

Table 4.10: Responses when asked if other Oxford County communities were rural or not rural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Not Rural</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beachville</td>
<td>64 (91%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>51 (73%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>19 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownsville</td>
<td>54 (77%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>15 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dereham Centre</td>
<td>51 (73%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>17 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drumbo</td>
<td>54 (77%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>11 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embro</td>
<td>63 (90%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickson</td>
<td>58 (83%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>12 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innerkip</td>
<td>57 (82%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>8 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeside</td>
<td>55 (90%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>12 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Elgin</td>
<td>62 (89%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>50 (72%)</td>
<td>14 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otterville</td>
<td>54 (77%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>12 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plattsville</td>
<td>45 (65%)</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>19 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>54 (77%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>11 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springford</td>
<td>53 (76%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
<td>14 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweaburg</td>
<td>61 (87%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavistock</td>
<td>51 (73%)</td>
<td>9 (13%)</td>
<td>10 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillsonburg</td>
<td>21 (31%)</td>
<td>44 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodstock</td>
<td>11 (15%)</td>
<td>58 (83%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the survey allow for an understanding of rural as it is described and used by residents of Ingersoll. While the use of rural changes from individual to individual some patterns did emerge. The majority of respondents considered Ingersoll to be rural most commonly citing an attachment to friends and family, the small population and lack of amenities as justification for this classification. This pattern did not appear to be impacted by age, or gender though individuals who lived in Ingersoll longer were more likely to consider Ingersoll as not rural. The classifications remained
similar when asked about other local communities with Tillsonburg and Woodstock classified as not rural and all others rural by the majority of respondents. This profile will be used in the following sections to represent a lay discourse of rural as held by the majority. The difference of opinions, and thoughts held by the minority will also be discussed.
5 Discussion

5.1 Comparison of Academic and Lay Discourses

The comparison of academic and lay discourse of rural, as found in this study, is sorted by the various categories of rural definitions that exist and have been employed in academia and government policy. The four categories, as were previously outlined in Chapter One, are descriptive definitions, socio-cultural definitions, rural as a locality and rural as a social representation. The sheer variety of justifications and descriptions provided by respondents show that one style of definition is not able to encompass how people interact with the concept of rural in their lives. This comparison allows for a discussion of academia’s ability to produce a definition, or at least a means of creating a definition that reflects the perspectives of residents of Ingersoll.

5.1.1 Assessment of Descriptive Definitions

Descriptive definitions and descriptors were evident in the survey responses, just as they are common in the academic discourse. All justifications, and descriptions of Ingersoll that rely on socio-cultural characteristics to define the area are descriptive in nature (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). Academia has a multitude of descriptive definitions of rural, in part because consensus on appropriate indicators and thresholds has not been reached. This theme is evident in the lay discourse from Ingersoll as the
same evidence was given to justify Ingersoll as rural and not rural. This was particularly obvious when population or size was given as evidence. The population of Ingersoll was small enough to be rural for some, while for others it was too large. Evidence also existed that respondents used both positive and negative means to determine if Ingersoll was rural or not.

Respondents referenced the population or population density 30 times as a means of justifying their belief that Ingersoll was rural or not rural. This was the most commonly coded theme from the participant responses. All of the respondents who referenced the population as a means of deciding whether Ingersoll is rural or not employed a descriptive definition of rural either entirely or in part. In addition, the size of the community was the second most common theme coded in the descriptions of Ingersoll. People who use these descriptions have an understanding of rural that aligns with descriptive definitions. In addition to population, the presence of amenities whether recreation facilities, shops or services also lead to descriptive definitions. Much in the same way the relative size of Ingersoll was contested, so to were the amenities. Amenities were referenced both as lacking leading to Ingersoll being rural and plentiful leading to a not rural designation for Ingersoll. All but six respondents employed positive methods, indicating what made Ingersoll rural or not rural, others used negative descriptive definitions. All six of the examples of a negative descriptive definitions being employed came from those who believe Ingersoll is rural. Respondents compared
Ingersoll to the likes of Guelph, London, and Woodstock indicating they were not rural, and anything smaller must be rural. This is congruent with the academic notion of rural being what is left over after urban has been defined (Cloke, 1985). In 1985, Cloke wrote about how this did not do justice to what rural really was and would likely find it encouraging that a negative descriptive definition was only used by four respondents. While descriptive definitions were present so too were socio-cultural definitions of rural.

5.1.2 Assessment of Socio-Cultural Definitions

Evidence of socio-cultural definitions being used to understand Ingersoll by respondents is evident in both the descriptions of Ingersoll and the justifications for how respondents chose to classify Ingersoll. Socio-cultural definitions come from the description of the people and their behaviors, rather than the physical characteristics of the area (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). When describing Ingersoll the most common theme employed by respondents is friends and family. This theme encompassed all comments indicating that Ingersoll was a kind, caring, friendly community and a safe place to raise a family. This notion of rurality shows itself in academia in the family friendly rural idyll as described by Tyrrell & Harmer (2015). In addition, two respondents also pointed to the people as justification for why Ingersoll was rural. The first suggested that they knew Ingersoll was rural because of the music and vehicle preferences in the town. This respondent indicated that because country music and pick-up trucks were common, the community must be rural. Another participant identified Ingersoll as rural
because of the relaxed nature of their employer in regards to policies such as dress codes. While socio-cultural descriptions were common from both those who thought Ingersoll was rural, and those who thought it was not rural, only those who believed Ingersoll was rural used it as justification. Survey responses did not stop at descriptive or socio-cultural definitions but also branched into the more theoretical definitions employed by academia.

5.1.3 Assessment of Rural as a Locality

Much like Friedland (2002), 27 survey respondents used agriculture and its presence, or absence, to assess Ingersoll’s rurality. This understanding of rural employs a rural as a locality definition, whereby rural is understood as a location where certain structures exist. Agriculture was coded as a theme on both sides of the rural debate. Both sides agreed agriculture was a rural activity, and if agriculture was present it meant the location was rural. Those that believed Ingersoll was rural indicated the community was deeply attached to agriculture, and productive farms surrounded them. On the other side there was notion that Ingersoll was not a place where agriculture was happening, though it may have been happening nearby. One respondent also pointed out that Ingersoll did not have an overly commercialized economy dominated by big box stores and the absence of this economy was what made Ingersoll rural. In this case rural is a location where a localized, small scale economy exists. This difference of
experience and perspective brings us to the final type of academic definition, social representation.

5.1.4 Assessment of Social Representation

All of the definitions, justifications and descriptions used in the survey responses are social representations of rural. They represent how rural is understood, and defined by residents of Ingersoll without use of the scientific process (Halfacree, 1993). A definition through social representation is based on the lived experiences and interpretations of individuals or sometimes groups in society (Halfacree, 1993). Survey respondents were invited to choose different methods to determine if Ingersoll was rural or not, using elements of all methods of defining rural. The lay discourse for defining rural is the social representation of rural for Ingersoll. Seeing the variation in responses to the survey adds credibility to Halfacree’s (1993) assertion that descriptive, socio-cultural and rural as a locality individually are not adequate to define rural and all of its intricacies. No one single means of defining is able to capture the variety of rurality as outlined by the survey respondents. Social representation allows for individuals and groups to use a definition of rural that fits their own conception of rural. While descriptive definitions were popular, being coded 47 times, 53 non-descriptive justifications were also coded. Relying on only one style of definition would limit residents of Ingersoll’s ability to express what makes their community rural or not rural.
Depending on individual experiences one style of definition may not be able to fully articulate what their conception of rural is.

5.1.5 Summary of Comparison of Lay and Academic Discourses

The comparison of academic and lay discourses of rural reveals that the varieties of definitions that exist in academia are all being employed by individuals. Upon first learning that academic literature could provide four styles of rural definitions, each with great variety I was astonished. My own conception of rural in the early stages of this investigation relied on a combination of descriptive and socio-cultural definitions, and I believed my conception was widely held. My conception did not draw from rural as a locality or ironically see a need for a social representation. This comparison has shown that lay people have a great diversity of rural conceptions and that variety is justly reflected in academia.

5.2 Comparison of Political and Lay Discourses

Political definitions of rural in this investigation came from two sources. The first being government policy and programs locally, provincially and federally. The second was mined from the political platforms of the four major political parties in Ontario. The definitions in policies and programs are more explicit than those found in the platforms and serve a purpose within the policy or program. The definitions mined from the
platforms were not meant as definitions but rather tell a story about how government and political parties see rural in Ontario. The definitions of rural from policy and programming classify Ingersoll as rural, or not rural along their pre-selected criteria. In some cases this classification matches the majority of respondents in others it does not. The definitions mined from political platforms can be compared to the descriptions of Ingersoll who believed Ingersoll was rural, and were therefore describing a rural place. Comparing these two discourses can allow for a discussion of the appropriateness of the definitions used by politicians for the people of Ontario.

A total of eight programs and policies were found to have a definition of rural and included in this thesis. Of the eight policies and programs four classify Ingersoll as rural and four do not. The RED, OCIF, Downtown Revitalization and CIRRO programs all classify Ingersoll as rural. The Oxford County Official Plan, the PPS, the NRRRI and Statistics Canada, using rural areas and rural and small town, classify Ingersoll as not rural. All four of the programs that consider Ingersoll to be rural are under provincial mandate. The NRRI and the PPS, however, are also provincially mandated and they consider Ingersoll to be not rural. The remaining definitions from local and federal levels do not consider Ingersoll to be rural. All of the local and federal definitions of rural included in this thesis classify Ingersoll as not rural.

Three of the four programs that consider Ingersoll to be rural use the same metric of 100,000 people or less as a definition, or part definition of rural. Those programs are the
RED, OCIF and downtown revitalization programs. The fourth program, CIRRO, delineates the urban areas of Ontario as Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Kitchener/Waterloo, Windsor and the GTA, leaving the rest of the province as rural. The definition employed in these programs aligns with the conception of rural held by the majority of survey respondents. These definitions would also count all of the other communities found in Oxford County rural. Tillsonburg and Woodstock were considered to be not rural by a majority of respondents making these definitions at odds with the conceptions of rural by the majority. While half of the programs and policies make Ingersoll rural, the other half do not and are at odds with the majority of survey respondents. Table 5.1 summarizes how each of the programs or policies classifies Ingersoll.

While in the minority, the perspectives of respondents who considered Ingersoll to be not rural were paralleled in some programs and policies. The Oxford County Official Plan, the PPS the NRRRI and the Statistics Canada all delineate Ingersoll as being not rural. The Official Plan and the PPS both describe lands in the planning system in Ontario and Oxford County. They both refer to rural lands as being outside of settlement areas, therefore precluding Ingersoll (County of Oxford, 1995; Government of Ontario, 2014). The Official Plan considers Ingersoll, along with Tillsonburg and Woodstock to be urban centers within Oxford. While deeming Ingersoll as rural is at odds with the Official Plan, Tillsonburg and Woodstock were considered by most to be not rural. Much like the
planning documents the rural definitions employed by Statistics Canada split Oxford County into rural and non-rural. None of the census subdivisions in Oxford County count as a rural area as defined in the Census Dictionary as they all have a population in excess of 1,000 people, with the smallest being East-Zorra Tavistock at 7,129 (County of Oxford, 2018a). Only Ingersoll, Tillsonburg and Woodstock, however, are census agglomerations. This means all remaining municipalities in Oxford County qualify as rural and small town (Statistics Canada, 2018). The rural small town definition, with the exception of Ingersoll, fits the conception of rural held by the majority of respondents based on their classification of communities in Oxford County. Unlike the previous programs and policies, the NRRRI denotes the entirety of Oxford County including Ingersoll as not rural. No municipality in Oxford County scores high enough on the RIO to be considered for financial compensation to attract physicians. This is likely due to the medical landscape in Oxford County with Ingersoll, Tillsonburg and Woodstock all having a hospital and the RIO awarding points for being further from medical resources. While the majority of respondents consider Ingersoll to be rural, half of the identified programs denote the community as not rural. Respondent’s conception of rural did align, at times, for the remainder of the county.
Table 5.1: Summary of government classifications of Ingersoll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Level of Government</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RED Program</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCIF</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Revitalization</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIRRO</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Not Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRRI</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Not Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County of Oxford Official Plan</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Not Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics Canada</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>Not Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examining policy and programs allows us insights into how rural is seen by government, but so too does the platforms released by each party for the 2018 provincial election. With the exception of the Green Party, all of the parties used the term rural in their platform. None of the parties defined what they meant by rural, however, they did leave clues. All of the platforms discussed rural areas as locations in need of services, infrastructure and economic development. Job creation, education, and agriculture were also common themes in the platforms. With the exception of agriculture, all of these topics were discussed as something to be fixed or improved in rural areas and all have an economic focus. The descriptions of Ingersoll by respondents indicating that Ingersoll is rural are similar but do have some differences.

A lack of services and amenities was the third most common theme to be coded in the descriptions of Ingersoll by those indicating their community is rural. While only 25 participants indicated Ingersoll was not, a lack of amenities was coded 10 times.
Respondents pointed out they lived in a boring, under-serviced community with limited resources. Respondents also pointed out that Ingersoll is a commuter town where people leave to go to work and a great many of them work in factories. This is similar to the political call to develop the economy and create jobs in rural communities. Where the conceptions differ is in positive conceptions of rural.

Ingersoll residents most commonly described their community as a friendly place to raise a family. This theme was coded in 67% of participant’s surveys. This notion of rural was not included in any of the platforms. Some respondents also indicated Ingersoll had a strong sense of community (20%) and it was their home (16%). Others also noted that while amenities may have been lacking they were not completely without. While the descriptions from residents were not all positive, they did see some benefits to being in a rural community. The political party platforms, however, focused solely on the negatives and what was missing, painting rural Ontario as a place without and a place that needs fixing. This is in part due to the nature of platforms. They are documents containing political promises, to try and describe how problems will be fixed in the future, no matter how bad they may currently be. Pairing the platforms with programs designed to aid rural areas and improve them does show a political discourse of rural being places that are lacking, places that need help. This discourse shares elements with the lay discourse, however the lay discourse also shows hope and provides understanding for why people wish to inhabit rural places.
5.3 Comparison of Academic and Political Discourses

Much like the lay discourse of rural the political definitions can be sorted along the methods of defining rural found in the academic literature. Comparing the political definitions to academic definitions reveals various trends about both the political discourses and academic discourses of rural. Immediately obvious is the lack of diversity in political definitions when compared to academic definitions. This lack of diversity has implications academically, politically and for local development.

The majority of definitions found in the government policies and programming are descriptive definitions, though there is some variety within the category. The RED, OCIF, Downtown Revitalization, CIRRO, NRRRI and Statistics Canada all rely on different thresholds for rurality. The RED, OCIF and Downtown Revitalization programs all have definition that designates rural as less than 100,000 people. They are all programs that are under the purview of the provincial government. The RED program goes a step further and adds a second way to qualify for rural based on population density, maintaining the descriptive method for defining rural. Should a population be over 100,000 but the density is less than 100 persons per square kilometer, the community is still designated as rural. The Downtown Revitalization program also has an additional descriptive component. In order to qualify for the program a community must be rural, but also meet minimum requirements for number of commercial
enterprises. Statistics Canada also uses population as a means for defining rural, though the population is much lower than the provincial policies and programs. To be considered a rural area, the population must be under 1,000 people. While larger, the rural and small town definition captures census subdivisions with less than 10,000 people. The Census of Population program is a federal initiative making it an interesting comparison for the provincially run programs. At the federal level a community needs to be much smaller in order to qualify as rural than provincially in Ontario. This demonstrates the diversity that exists within Canada and suggests that provinces have taken the necessary steps to develop policy that is regionally appropriate. A further, cross Canada investigation would be necessary to find if that is in fact the case.

The NRRRI utilizes the RIO to determine if a census subdivision is rural enough to qualify for funding. While the RIO is an index drawing on many factors it is still a descriptive definition of rural. The RIO relies on population and density it also draws on the density and distance to services. The use of an index allows for rurality to be scored rather than putting communities in two discrete categories. It is the only index found in the political definitions, it is also the only definition to include factors beyond population and density to determine rurality.

The land use planning definitions from the Oxford County Official Plan, and the PPS are also descriptive, though they are different from the previous policies and programs definitions. These policies define rural by land use rather than a particular location. As
definitions they are also less clear than the others with clear separations between rural and not rural.

The definitions found in policy and programming are all descriptive. There is some variation within the category, but policy makers do not stray from this method of defining rural. This lack of diversity displays disconnect between the academia and the public sector that are responsible for designing policy and programming. It has already been demonstrated that this level of disconnect does not exist between lay discourses and academic discourses as both include a wide variety of rural definitions. This one-dimensional approach to defining rural impacts who is and is not affected by rural policies and programming. By relying on definitions that are based primarily on population, policy and programming is unable to respond to issues of community capacity, distance to larger centers or how residents see themselves and their community. Residents and development actors too need to be aware of the variety of definitions and be diligent in understanding where opportunities exist for their community based on their classification. Definitions of rural exist within academia that would allow for a more holistic view of what it means to be rural and could help policy makers design better policy. The implications also stem into academia, as academics need to recognize that the creation of new definitions, or new conceptions of rural is not enough. Researchers need to demonstrate the utility of their findings and ensure they can be transferred into practice.
The comparisons in this discussion reveal the academic, political and lay discourses of rural are different. Understanding and acknowledging these differences could lead to a better future. The concluding chapter of this thesis will make a series of comments, and challenges for academia, the political sphere, and for everyday citizens of Ingersoll and beyond. In addition, the discussion was hampered by the emergence of new questions that have not yet been answered, there are many opportunities for future research in this field.
6 Conclusion

The findings and discussion in this thesis have resulted in conclusions that can be applied to each of the three discourses that were examined. The conclusion first revisits the four research questions that were posed in the introduction chapter of this thesis. Throughout the thesis each question has been addressed and answered and this section will act as a summary of how each questioned was answered. In addition, lessons can be learned by academics, members of the political sphere, and lay individuals as well. This chapter outlines key lessons and implications for each group, as discovered through this project. The lessons are not in the form of recommendations but rather as challenges to tackle in the future. This research also left me with questions that were not included in the scope of this thesis. The final section of this chapter will introduce those questions and opportunities for further investigation.

The first research question is “how is rural defined in the academic literature?” This question was answered through the literature review and a more comprehensive understanding can be found in Chapter two. In summary the literature provided and multitude of rural definitions with various indicators and elements being incorporated (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). While great variety exists all of the definitions can be sorted into four categories: descriptive, socio-cultural, rural as a locality, and social representations of rural (Halfacree, 1993; Woods, 2005). Each of the categories has
benefits and drawbacks, which is the focus of much academic debate. There is no single definition of rural emerging from the literature but rather a collection of methods that are used.

The second question posed inquired as to how rural is defined by government in the context of South-Western Ontario. In order to answer this question policy, programming and political platforms were mined for references of ‘rural’ and subsequent definitions. In policy and programming documents reviewed the definitions of rural are clearer, compared to use in election platforms. Various definitions were found in policy and programming, half denoted Ingersoll as rural, while the other half did not. A more detailed look at which programs and policies classed Ingersoll as rural can be found in chapters four and five. The understanding of what rural is from political platforms did not classify communities but rather described rural communities. The descriptions were of communities in need of development and improvement.

The third question introduced in the introduction asked how residents of Ingersoll describe their own community. This question was answered through analysis of survey responses from residents of Ingersoll. Like academic definitions of rural there exists a great variety of understandings and definitions of rural. The community was split on whether they lived in a rural community, 2/3 of the community indicated that Ingersoll was rural, while the remaining 1/3 indicated Ingersoll was not rural. The justification for selecting rural or not rural varied from respondent to respondent suggesting that not
everyone living in Ingersoll has the same experience or relationship with their community. Further discussion of the survey methods and the findings from the survey can be found in chapters three and four.

The final question, and the subject of chapter five, is how do academic, political and lay discourses of rural compare in the case of Ingersoll. Each group had differences that lead to key comparisons. When comparing the academic discourses and the political discourses it was immediately obvious that political definitions of rural did not reflect the variety that was found in academic publications regarding rural definitions. The opposite was true when comparing academic and lay discourses. Each of the four categories of rural definitions that emerged from the literature were also present in the lay discourses of rural. The political and lay discourses were both split on whether Ingersoll was rural or not rural though the lay discourses had evidence of a large variety of definitions that was not reflected in the political discourse. A larger discussion of the comparisons can be found in chapter five.

Each of the four research questions put forward at the beginning of this thesis have been answered throughout the document. A brief summary of each answer has been included in the conclusion along with the location of the responses in other chapters. In answering the research questions a series of challenges emerged that can be put forth to academia, the political sphere and citizens.
6.1 Challenge for Academia

This investigation displayed the wide variety of rural definitions that academics have provided in the literature. I believe the work that has been done on understanding and defining rural has been robust, but there are opportunities to improve. The first challenge I pose to academics is to go beyond creating and debating new and innovative ways of defining rural and to demonstrate how they could be useful to policy makers. The second challenge is a challenge that will be posed to each group, but I feel that it is that important. The challenge is to be clear about what rural means when it is being used.

The literature in this thesis revealed that there are four different categories of defining rural, each different from the last. It was also shown that all are used in academia with varied levels of support and debate. This variety however, has not yet permeated policy. For this reason, I challenge academia to demonstrate how varied definitions of rural could be employed in policy to hopefully see options explored by policy makers. While expanding definitions impacts and informs research I believe it can also have an impact on policy and expand into the political discourses of rural.

The second challenge for academics is to be clear and deliberate about what rural means in each context it is used. The variety of definitions that are used, paired with the varied conceptions of what rural is can lead to confusion. Conducting research and
subsequently making conclusions requires a certain degree of precision and clarity. Part of this clarity is clearly demonstrating the geography that is being investigated and discussed. If that geography is being described as rural, efforts should be made to qualify what that means. Clearly indicating what rural means in different contexts can lead to better research and stronger conclusions.

Being deliberate in the definition that is used could also lead to better research. I challenge academics to be deliberate in their choice of rural definition. Altering the definition of rural can alter the findings and conclusions of a research initiative. In order to ensure the conclusions are appropriate the definition of rural that is selected needs to be the best choice for the task at hand. The challenges to the academy are mirrored in the challenges to policy makers as co-operation is needed.

6.2 Challenge for the Political Sphere

This research examined the political sphere through policy, programming and political election platforms. Like all other actors identified in the thesis there is room for improvement and I have three challenges for the future that align closely with the challenges that were put forward to academia. The first is to seek out alternative methods of defining rural that may do a better job of delineating the geography a policy is meant. The second challenge is to be more deliberate when creating definitions of
The third, like the others, is to be clear about what rural means when it is being used.

Policy and programming in Ontario utilize only descriptive definitions of rural, with the exception of one definition that is an index pulling multiple variables. These multiple variable approaches might be the best definitions for their respective roles however there is likely room for improvement. I challenge policy makers to employ a wider variety of rural definitions to try and target populations and communities more effectively. This challenge does not rest solely on policy makers, but was also extended to academics to better demonstrate how varied definitions could be used. The second challenge was also made to academics.

I challenge the political sphere, in particular those that are creating policy, to be more deliberate in their definitions of rural. One example of what appears to be a very deliberate definition is the NRRRI. This policy is aimed at healthcare in rural communities and it is clear that the definition of rural employed was deliberate in meeting this goal. This approach could be applied to other issues that policy is seeking address. Rather turning to the commonly used figure of 100,000 people or less a targeted definition could be employed. For example, in the OMAFRA RED program further requirements regarding existing economic development could target the program further and reach the intended communities.
Like all groups I challenge the political sphere to be clear about what rural means when it is being used. A lack of clarity was most apparent in the political platforms from the provincial election. Three of the four parties made references to rural, yet none of them defined the term or clarified what it meant. Many inferences were needed to come to any conclusions about how the parties think of rural. Platforms make references to rural and rural communities, but no one can be sure what communities they were talking about. For citizens to better understand how politicians view their communities and others, a clear explanation of what rural means to each party is required.

6.3 Challenge for Citizens

Citizens are those who make up the lay discourse of rural. In the case of this investigation the focus was on residents of Ingersoll who elected to participate in the research. The challenge here goes beyond just residents of Ingersoll and challenges all with a lay understanding of rural and rurality. I have three challenges for citizens, the first is to be clear about what rural means, the second is to understand how they and their community are classified, the third is to take a wider look at what it means to be rural and what a rural future could look like.

The first challenge is the same as it has been for all groups. The diversity in conceptions, definitions and understandings of rural is great. This leads to confusion or potential confusion when using the term. In our everyday lives it is important to
recognize that we interact with people who have a different conception of rural than we do and we need to explain what rural means to us prior to engaging in meaningful dialogue and avoid confusion. Understanding rurality and being clear in what it means can improve relationship between politicians, policy makers and knowledgeable practitioners with whom you may interact. Being clear what rural means to you can ensure that discussions about your future or your communities’ future are being had on a level playing field. This need is likely weaker than it is for policy makers, local development practitioners or academics but it is still important.

The second challenge is to understand how your community is classified in policy and programming. Understanding how your community is viewed allows you opportunities you may not have been aware of. As demonstrated the provincial government in Ontario has four programs that target rural communities for their benefit. Being aware that you or your community qualifies is the first step in being able to take advantage of what is available. While we rely on local politicians and organizations to be advocates, understanding what is available can better position you as a community member to pressure those local actors. Without an understanding of how your community is classified it may be difficult to properly advocate for yourself and your community.

The final challenge I have is for people to recognize that all in their community do not experience the rural idyll. This is a call to look at their community and strive to reach
a future rural idyll that is more inclusive to those that have been previously left out. This call to action comes from the work of Shucksmith (2018) who suggested using the nostalgic idea of a rural idyll as a method to move towards a good countryside. Many positive descriptors of Ingersoll were found in the survey results, but so too were negative comments. This is not meant to put down those that are currently living the rural idyll but rather a reminder that not everyone has the same experience.

6.4 Future Research Opportunities

Like many research projects this thesis has created as many if not more questions than it answered. Further investigation along this theme is required in two veins. The first calls for further investigation at a local level, whether in Oxford County or another municipality. The second requires a larger lens to investigate trends at a national and provincial level in Canada.

The first is an investigation to look at differences of rural classifications from people outside of a community, and how they justify their decision. An interesting distinction may have been found when asking individuals to comment on their home community compared to neighboring communities. Ingersoll, Tillsonburg and Woodstock were considered to be rural and not rural depending on the policy or program in question. Regardless of the program or policy they always fell in the same category of rural or not. Meaning that every program or policy that considered Ingersoll as rural also classified
Tillsonburg and Woodstock as rural and every program or policy that indicated Ingersoll was not rural, classified Woodstock and Tillsonburg as not rural. However, the survey found a majority of respondents believed Ingersoll to be rural, and Tillsonburg and Woodstock to be not rural. Also of interest is that all communities outside of those three are considered rural under all the programs and policies, with the exception of the NRRRI, and the majority of respondents also indicated they were rural. Understanding why respondents indicated Ingersoll was rural and Tillsonburg and Woodstock are not may help to understand how perceptions dictate our understanding of rurality. Further investigation would be required to fully understand the conceptions of rural held by survey respondents. I am also left wondering how results may change if residents of Tillsonburg or Woodstock were asked to complete a similar survey? I am also curious how policy makers may classify the communities in Oxford County without access to the definitions and classifications from the policies readily available to them?

The second area that requires further investigation is a more in depth look at the differences between the federal definitions of rural and provincial definitions. Programming and policy used a large threshold when compared to the federal Statistics Canada Census of Population program and the subsequent definitions of rural. Understanding if there is a difference in provincial discourse of rural would show evidence that provinces are making a conscious choice to define rural in an appropriate manner for their situation. In addition, a more robust lay discourse could be developed.
by expanding the survey to more communities and by reaching a statistically representative sample size. This would add an element of significance to the investigation.

While there are further questions and avenues that could not be addressed in this project much was achieved. Through investigation of secondary sources and primary survey data a comparison of political, academic and lay discourses of rural was carried out. This thesis outlined the all of the work that was undertaken in order to complete this comparison. Each chapter was necessary to reach the ultimate goal and meet the objectives as set out in the introduction. The objectives were to compile a list of rural definitions employed by local and provincial government policy, understand how rural is represented in political platforms from the 2018 Ontario provincial election, examine the lay discourse surrounding community descriptors in Ingersoll, Ontario and finally to compare the discourses of rural that were uncovered. The process raised questions but also managed to answer questions as well.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1 – ETHICS CERTIFICATE

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University’s ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:

- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:

- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit an Annual Renewal to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: Date: February 27, 2018

Stephen P. Lewis
Chair, Research Ethics Board-General
What People Say:
Descriptors of Communities in South Western Ontario

Student Researcher: Neil Stoop
Research Committee: Dr. Ryan Gibson, Dr. Wayne Caldwell

Descriptive definitions, often employed by policy makers are not always congruent with the definitions of rural the people use to describe themselves, and their communities. The goal of this research is to evaluate the appropriateness of language used in policy, programming and research in Ontario. The research will compare official definitions and community descriptors with survey responses from community members asked to describe their home community.

The definitions of various community descriptors are not as straightforward as they appear on the surface. There is much academic debate regarding how communities should be described and classified. Differences in classification and description impact the policies in place, programming available and people’s perceptions of a given community.

This research will employ a survey inquiring how residents of a case community in South Western Ontario describe, and classify their home community. The results of this data collection will be analyzed and compared to official classification systems used at a national level in Canada. The results will also be situated in a larger body of definition research for communities in other parts of the world including, the United States, and Europe.

Respondents to this survey will be asked to complete a short survey. Completion of the survey will take an estimated time of 5-10 minutes. This research will benefit society by aiding researchers in understanding how language differs in policy and as used by everyday citizens. Furthering this understanding will increase awareness and could lead to better policy creation, and better understanding of policy. The survey will not collect any personal identifiers, and poses no risk to participants.

Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Conduct review of the relevant literature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Finalize research and survey design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Obtain ethics approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Conduct surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Analyze results of survey and compile thesis document</td>
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Definition of Rural Survey

Note: The survey was conducted online through Qualtrics. The following demonstrates each of the questions posed to participants, however, does not demonstrate the graphic layout of the online survey.

Q1
- I understand that the purpose of this research project is to explore the language used to describe and classify communities in South Western Ontario.

- I understand that the purpose of this survey is to explore my perspective on my community, and how I describe it.

- I understand that the study in which I have agreed to participate will involve a survey, where I will be asked to respond to a series of questions, that will be recorded digitally online by the researcher administering the survey.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time prior to final completion and submission of survey results.

- I understand that, if I choose to withdraw from the study prior to the final completion of the survey, all of the information I have provided will be left out of the data analysis and will be destroyed.

- I understand that my right to withdraw will be upheld until the survey has been completed.

- I understand that I may ask questions of the researchers at any point during the research process.

- I understand that there will be no payment for participation.

- I understand that the results of this study may be disseminated in academic and professional journal articles, conference presentations, a thesis and a summary report.

- I understand that the data I provide will be stored in a secure location for a period of five years, after which will be destroyed.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact Dr. Ryan Gibson by telephone 519-824-4120.
I have read the information provided for the study “Languages of Rural in South Western Ontario” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study, I have been given a copy of this form.

Agree (1)

Disagree (2)

Start of Block: Community Descriptors

Q13 Are you a resident of Ingersoll Ontario?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q13 = No (2)

Q6 Describe your community, Ingersoll, using five words, or phrases.

Q7 Do you consider Ingersoll to be rural?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q12 Why do you consider Ingersoll to be rural or not rural?

Q9 For each of the local Oxford County communities, indicate whether they are rural or not rural. If you are unsure, or not familiar with the community leave the response blank.

Beachville (1)  Rural (1)  Not Rural (2)

Bright (2)       o       o

Brownsville (3)  o       o

Dereham Centre (4)  o       o

111
Drumbo (5)  o  o  o
Embro (6)  o  o
Hickson (7)  o  o
Innerkip (8)  o  o
Ingersoll (9)  o  o
Lakeside (10)  o  o
Mount Elgin (11)  o  o
Norwich (12)  o  o
Otterville (13)  o  o
Plattsville (14)  o  o
Princeton (15)  o  o
Springford (16)  o  o
Sweaburg (17)  o  o
Tavistock (18)  o  o
Tillsonburg (19)  o  o
Woodstock (20)  o  o

End of Block: Community Descriptors

Start of Block: General Info

Q4 Select the appropriate age bracket?
o 0-17 years of age (1)
o 18-30 (2)
o 31-40 (3)
o 41-50 (4)
o 51-60 (5)
o 61-70 (6)
o 71+ (7)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q4 = 0-17 years of age (1)

Q3 How long have you been a resident of Ingersoll Ontario?
o 0-5 years (1)
o 5-10 years (2)
o 10+ Years (3)

Q5 Please indicate you gender
o Male (1)
o Female (2)
Other (3)