Assessing Resilience in Agriculture: A Case Study of Old Order Mennonite Communities in Northern Ontario

by

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING RESILIENCE IN AGRICULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF OLD ORDER MENNONITE COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

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University of Guelph, 2018

Advisor: Dr. Wayne Caldwell

This research analyzes the resilience of Old Order Mennonite farmers that have migrated to northern Ontario for agricultural endeavours. Over the past fifteen years, Anabaptist farmers, including Old Order Mennonites, have moved to northern Ontario as raising land prices and limited land availability in southern Ontario has restricted their ability to purchase new land. Northern Ontario, with an abundance of productive, less expensive land, has proven to be an opportune location for many farmers. These farmers have increased access to local food, broadened the productive spectrum of crops and improved food security for many communities. Their economic and social impacts on northern communities has been significant, as has their impact on the broader farm community. While the Old Order Mennonite community has grown in northern Ontario, the factors of their resilience are unknown. This dissertation examined three Old Order Mennonite communities in northern Ontario, utilizing key informant interviews with community members, municipal representatives, provincial staff and non-Mennonite farmers in order to understand the agricultural resilience of Old Order
Mennonites. The results demonstrated that agricultural diversification, as well as a strong sense of community and cultural convictions were important factors within their resilience. This research also found that transformation and decline, often viewed separately from resilience, did not weaken the communities but contributed to their resilience.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my father. His pride in my accomplishments, encouragement to follow my passion and insistence of maintaining a sense of humour through every challenge made this journey possible.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In reflecting on this incredible research journey, my sincerest gratitude must first be extended to the research participants that aided this study. The Old Order Mennonite communities were welcoming and supportive of my research and shared a keen understanding of the value of this project. Their willingness to discuss past challenges, future opportunities and cultural convictions with someone outside of their community was greatly appreciated and I have immense respect for each participant.

This research was also enhanced with unwavering support from OMAFRA staff in both southern and northern Ontario. Their interest in this research, insights into northern agriculture and eagerness to support my endeavours enriched this experience.

I was incredibly fortunate to have Dr. Wayne Caldwell as my advisor through this journey. Dr. Caldwell encouraged me to pursue my own research interests and his mentorship allowed me to grow as a student, researcher and academic. His positive demeanour, sense of humour, “high fives” and “superstars” made this an amazing experience.

Dr. Chris Fullerton has been part of my academic journey from the start of my undergraduate degree and I would not have pursued a PhD without his initial encouragement. I am grateful for his willingness to be part of my supervisory committee and continued positive influence on my academic pursuits. I am also grateful for Dr. Christopher Bryant’s support, insightful comments and keen interest in this research project. His constructive feedback and confidence in my work contributed to a positive graduate student experience.

I am also thankful to Dr. Tom Daniels and Dr. Martin Holland for their role on my examining committee. Their thoughtful questions and comments validated the importance of my research and role within the research community. These views were echoed within SEDRD and I feel quite fortunate to have completed this degree surrounded by such passionate faculty, staff and students.

I must express my sincerest gratitude to my family and friends throughout this final degree. To my mom, Melissa, Jessica and Nicole, I do not take your presence in my life for granted and I thank you for listening, understanding and encouraging me throughout my studies.

As a first-generation student, I understand that much of my family was not able to attend a post-secondary institution and I do not take these opportunities for granted. As such, I am grateful to my grandparents who were forced to sacrifice their education due to an unfair political climate. You have always understood the value of an education and have supported every degree I have sought. Thank you for teaching me to appreciate the privilege of an education and embrace every opportunity to learn.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NeCN</td>
<td>Northeast Community Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOFIA</td>
<td>Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFA</td>
<td>Ontario Federation of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMAFRA</td>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs</td>
</tr>
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## Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>Reliable access to a sufficient amount of affordable food that meets daily consumption needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Sovereignty</td>
<td>The right of individuals to define their food system and access food that they determine to be culturally appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>The amount of change that can impact an individual or system before it adapts to a different state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic Social Resilience</td>
<td>Acknowledges that a system is not static, and provides the opportunity for transformation and decline to contribute to an individual’s or system’s resilience. transformational social resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifunctional Agriculture</td>
<td>Recognizes that a farm has multiple functions, including the production of food, consumption of the landscape by selling an experience to visitors and diversified economic activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluriactivity</td>
<td>Refers to all sources of income generated by a farm household and includes income acquired through off farm employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Diversification</td>
<td>A method of providing farm households with additional sources of income. These income generating activities exist at the farm gate (e.g. roadside produce stands, agritourism activities, wineries, etc.) and secondary uses not related to the farm (e.g. manufacturing activities, carpentry shops, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivist Agriculture</td>
<td>Limited to the productive capabilities of farmland and is often viewed as an intensive, industrially driven system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-productivist Agriculture</td>
<td>Less capital-intensive agricultural practices that focus on the consumption of the landscape and not production of goods.</td>
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1 Introduction

“We moved to the north because we saw lots of opportunity. It was a leap of faith. It was too big a move to make without faith. We saw the potential here and all of this land not being farmed. We saw all of this land that needed to come back into production. It was farmland in the past and should be farmland once again. It seems like such a waste when you see all of this farmland getting covered by brush and eventually forgotten about. My wife and I grew up on farms in southern Ontario that were eventually consumed by urban sprawl. It's a hard thing to see. So, we decided that rather than continue to drive up the cost of farmland in southern Ontario, we would move to the north.” Farmer F, Black River-Matheson

Access to local and healthful food in many communities in Ontario is often taken for granted. In many northern Ontario towns, access to fresh food is limited and production of local food is not possible due to climate and terrain. Issues of food security are heightened in northern communities given challenges associated with food access. Food sovereignty may be improved through local food production; however, access to seasonally grown food is impacted by the vast geographic area, poorly developed transportation networks and lack of a robust agricultural sector. While issues of food security and food sovereignty exist in southern Ontario, the abundance of productive farmland, diversity of locally produced food and access to markets limits the impact of these concerns. Northern Ontario, depicted in Figure 1.1, represents the majority of Ontario's landmass, with low population densities.

In recent years, agriculture in northern Ontario is experiencing a renaissance, as new agricultural endeavours have been undertaken and access to locally produced food has slowly been expanding. The expansion of agriculture in the north has been supported by the provincial government through funding programs, policy direction and
educational outreach. Currently, agriculture in northern Ontario generates approximately $200 million in revenue, representing a significant economic industry for many rural locales (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs [OMAFRA], 2016). According to the 2016 Census of Agriculture, 817,244 acres of farmland are in production and while northern Ontario encompasses 90% of Ontario’s land base, this farm area only represents 6.62% of farms within the province (OMAFRA, 2017). There is significant potential for agricultural development within northern Ontario. One region, in particular, commonly referred to as the Great Clay Belt (depicted below in Figure 1.2), due to large deposits of clay soil, is recognized as a prominent agricultural region.

Over 2.5 million square kilometres of rural land in Canada has been mapped and classified according to its potential to support agriculture. The classification is on a scale from 1 to 7, with class 1 soil being free from barriers to support agriculture and class 7...
being unsuitable for agriculture. Within this inventory, classes 1, 2 and 3 are referred to as prime agricultural land, considered the best and most productive soil for agricultural production. While less than 2% of the Great Clay Belt has been developed for agriculture, there are 4.4 million acres of class 2, 3 and 4 soils within Ontario’s portion (OMAFRA, 2017). While class 2 and 3 soils are prime agricultural land and class 4 soils have some barriers to agricultural production, this is still a significant amount of land with agricultural potential. Furthermore, it is important to note that while climate change
is expected to have negative impacts on many southern and coastal regions, it is hypothesized that agriculture in high-latitude developed countries may benefit (Graves et al., 2015). Considering the vast expanse of unutilized agricultural land and potential benefits of climate change, there is opportunity within northern Ontario for the expansion of the agricultural sector. Given the lower population densities of northern communities, unique challenges associated with geography and climate, and vast distances between population centres, agriculture in northern Ontario is removed from the mainstream and in many instances, can be considered quite remote.

While new agricultural opportunities currently exist, research regarding agriculture in northern Ontario is quite limited and has been largely scientific in nature. Research regarding local food has typically focused on the consumer and improving access to local food through food hubs and farmers’ markets (Bellamingie and Walker, 2013; Nelson and Stroink, 2013; Stroink and Nelson, 2013). Little research has been conducted on the role of the producer, processor and distributor. Given the expansion of agriculture in northern Ontario, it is important to understand the motivations of these farmers and challenges they have faced. The expansion of agriculture and improved access to local food is dependent on farmers and as such, it is important for research to be conducted at the farm scale. Farming in northern Ontario presents a variety of unique challenges associated with climate and soil, as well as access to markets, transportation and other logistical issues. Considering this, farmers in the north demonstrate a high level of resilience, given their perseverance and determination to farm in a geographically challenging area. Understanding this resilience can offer
insights into the future of agriculture in northern Ontario, including decisions to farm in the north, the type of agricultural endeavour to pursue and the challenges that existing and new farmers face.

The agricultural industry in northern Ontario has undergone significant restructuring as the farm industry is currently undergoing a period of regeneration. There has been renewed interest at the provincial and municipal level to invest in northern agriculture and promote the expansion of this industry. While new farmers are moving to the north, it is important to understand the challenges they have faced and the strategies they employed to adapt to changes both at the farm level and beyond. The resilience of northern farmers is evident in their continued farm operation and the expansion and diversification of the industry. Given the potential associated with northern agriculture, it is important to understand how farmers overcome challenges and the strategies they utilized to remain viable farm enterprises.

The provincial government, through OMAFRA, has recognized the potential for agriculture in northern Ontario and has developed a strategy to guide growth and development in the north. Building on the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, which identified agriculture as a priority economic sector in northern Ontario and the Premier’s 2014 mandate letter which directed OMAFRA to explore opportunities for agricultural development in the north, the strategy seeks to enhance agriculture, aquaculture and food processing (OMAFRA, 2016a). In recognizing the potential for agriculture in northern Ontario, a critical assessment of the challenges and adaptation strategies utilized by farmers is necessary. It was noted earlier that much research regarding local
food has been focused on the consumer and that a shift to the producer is needed. As farmers are directly responsible for the production of food, insights into their experiences, including adaptation strategies in northern Ontario, are necessary. These insights can add stability to the agriculture sector, provide guidance for the expansion of farming in the north and enhance access to local food. Further, this research can better inform the provincial government of the unique challenges associated with agriculture in northern Ontario including social, economic and environmental barriers.

Of particular interest is one subsect of the farming population: Old Order Mennonites. Since 2004, there has been a movement of Old Order Mennonites to northern Ontario for the purpose of establishing new agricultural communities. The migration of these farmers has been significant and attracted the attention of local media outlets. Newspaper articles detailed enhanced agricultural systems, improved access to local food and regenerated rural communities (Aube, 2012; White, 2014; Alamenciak, 2015). These farmers utilize limited forms of technology and travel by horse and buggy and likely created a spectacle for local residents when they arrived in the north. Given their use of a horse and buggy for transportation and plain clothing, the Old Order Mennonites stand out within modern society and visually, are easily identifiable. As such, it is understandable that their presence was picked up through local media.

The impact of Old Order Mennonites on local food, food security and rural economic development are areas of interest. More important, is an understanding of their resilience and their ability to persevere in areas with more severe environmental
conditions, smaller populations and fewer services. These farmers moved from highly productive agricultural areas in southern Ontario to northern locales that lack the same agricultural infrastructure, market and consumer base. Yet they appear to have been successful given the increasing number of Old Order Mennonite households, productive agricultural land and availability of locally produced food. Much research regarding Old Order Mennonites has been conducted but has often focused on health, education, community structure and gender dynamics, among others (Kraybill, 1998; Bridger et al., 2001; Lee, 2005; Gingrich and Lightman, 2006; Schlabach, 2007; Donnermeyer and Anderson, 2014); research related to their agricultural success, farming model and migratory motivations is limited (Stinner, Paoletti and Stinner, 1989; Bennett, 2003; Johnson, Fraser and Hawkins, 2016). In studying these aspects, their resilience may be understood, and lessons can be identified for the broader agricultural community and other northern communities with potential agricultural sectors. Resilience is an appropriate framework for studying the movement of Old Order Mennonites to northern Ontario, as it assesses a systems capacity to adapt to challenges. It can be hypothesized that the Old Order Mennonites faced a number of challenges in their move and continue to face challenges associated with agricultural viability in northern Ontario. Their continued migration and expansion of agricultural endeavours demonstrates a level of resilience and an ability to adapt to the challenges of the north.

1.1 Research Question and Objectives

The barriers the Old Order Mennonite communities face, mechanisms to overcome these challenges and reasons for their success are largely unknown but their
unique culture and determination to maintain a traditional lifestyle within a rapidly modernizing world demonstrate a high level of resilience. Old Order Mennonite communities in southern Ontario have maintained a focus on small-scale family farms that utilize a diversity of agricultural practices and non-agricultural businesses to support the farm household. It is unknown whether these same strategies have been adopted in northern Ontario and whether they are necessary for the long-term viability of their farm and community. The agricultural sector in northern Ontario is considerably less developed than southern Ontario, which may result in significant barriers to farm viability. It is recognized that the challenges associated with agriculture in northern Ontario are not limited to Old Order Mennonite farmers and new, non-Mennonite farmers in northern Ontario are likely to experience similar barriers to agriculture. These farmers may utilize diversification strategies and maintain smaller-scaled farms to remain viable; however, it is anticipated that some aspects of the Old Order Mennonite experience are unique given their cultural and religious beliefs. As noted above, there has been limited research conducted with this cultural group in relation to their agricultural experiences and additional research is necessary. There may be opportunity for non-Mennonite farmers to learn from the experiences of Old Order Mennonite farmers and this aspect will be addressed in the following research question, sub questions and objectives:

- How do Old Order Mennonite communities demonstrate agricultural resilience in northern Ontario?
  - What is the role of diversification within their resilience and how does it contribute to the viability of their community?
Are there lessons to be learnt from the Old Order Mennonite community that non-Mennonite farmers can utilize for their own resilience in northern Ontario?

1.1.1 Research Objectives

- Assess the current level of agricultural development in northern Ontario, including which areas are undergoing expansion and if this expansion is attributed to an Old Order Mennonite migration
- Identify communities that have experienced an influx of Old Order Mennonites and determine the motivations for farmers to start farming in northern Ontario
- Identify the challenges impacting Old Order Mennonites, the strategies they have utilized to adapt to these challenges and how these strategies demonstrate their resilience
- Analyze the results of the previous objectives in order to identify appropriate strategies that can be utilized by non-Mennonite farmers in northern Ontario

In order to answer this research question and meet the objectives of this study, a case study approach was utilized and three communities of Old Order Mennonites in northern Ontario participated. This research involved many preliminary field trips to northern Ontario to gain an understanding and appreciation of the geography of the north, as well as a sense of the distance, population densities and infrastructure available in northern communities. These preliminary trips began in the summer of 2016 and provided a foundational understanding of the uniqueness of northern Ontario and a multitude of northern communities. These trips also provided the opportunity to meet with northern OMAFRA staff and gain a better understanding on types of agriculture common in the north, opportunities for development and areas of decline. These interviews also provided further contacts and background information on the movement of Old Order Mennonites. Case studies were identified based on information from OMAFRA and other key informants, which identified three Old Order Mennonite
communities in northern Ontario. Farmers from each community were invited to participate in the study, with some declining the invitation. Interviews with farm organizations, municipal representatives and non-Mennonite farmers provided additional information and insight. The majority of data analyzed were based on semi-structured interviews with participants and data were coded and analyzed without the use of any software.¹

1.2 Main Findings

The main findings of this study reflect the importance of diversification as a component of resilience within the Old Order Mennonite agricultural community. Diversification strategies included farm activities, as well as a number of non-farm secondary businesses. Further, the cultural and religious beliefs of this community resulted in high levels of social capital and a community-centric approach to overcoming challenges. The findings also suggest that decline and transformation were intrinsic within the resilience framework and contributed to the adaptive capacity of the community. Decline did not necessarily make a community or farmer more vulnerable; as the findings note, decline often resulted in further transformation and diversification, thus strengthening the community and creating a robust agricultural sector.

¹ The research for this dissertation is one component of a broader study examining the movement of farmers to northern Ontario. This research received funding from OMAFRA and generally examines challenges and opportunities related to agricultural activities and improved access to local food. The research proceeded consistent with the goals and objectives of the funder.
This research also provided lessons for non-Mennonite farmers that migrated to northern Ontario, particularly focusing on the importance of diversification, social capital and partnerships. The challenges farmers face are heightened in northern Ontario due to geographic distance, limited services and higher costs. As a result, diversification reduces risk, social capital contributes to a positive sense of place and partnerships offer opportunities to share knowledge, provide needed assistance in times of struggle and strengthen community bonds. The findings of this study support the value of conducting research in the social sciences, exploring the meaning of resilience and the knowledge generated when working with unique cultural groups.²

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

In the sections that follow, an analysis of the resilience of Old Order Mennonite farmers who have migrated to northern Ontario is presented. This begins in Chapter 2 with a review of relevant literature related to our understanding of the term resilience, the transitions family farming has undergone and the linkages between resilience and family farms. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology employed, including justification of the case study method, the theoretical framework and an overview of the three study sites. Chapter 4 explores the data collected through findings based on each community. A summary of the similarities between study sites and their demonstration of resilience

² While religion is fundamental to the Mennonite community and is interwoven in aspects of culture and agriculture, this dissertation is less about religion and more about agriculture, agriculture practices and how the beliefs of Old Order Mennonites contribute to resilience of the individual farm and Mennonite community. This dissertation does not provide a critical lens of the Mennonite religion or social structure. The goal of this research was to explore resilience of Old Order Mennonite communities in northern Ontario and this goal has been maintained throughout this dissertation.
is also presented. Chapter 5 builds on these findings by assessing the relevance of the resilience framework and applicability of this research beyond the Old Order Mennonite community. Finally, Chapter 6 provides concluding remarks and potential areas of future research.
2 Literature Review

“I find it quite interesting that all this research is going into agriculture and people are becoming more interested in the north. Everyone seems to be watching agriculture up here and watching what we’re doing. Even the government is promoting it as ‘Ontario’s final frontier’. But people have to realize that everything is a little harder in northern Ontario. If you give up too easily, you’ve thrown it all to the wind. I know that I haven’t done everything 100% perfect or done everything right, but we try to determine what the most important thing is for today. The nature of farming is the unknown, the unknown challenges are what keep you going. The best feeling for me is when you see progress and in farming, it’s watching the corn grow or welcoming a new calf into the world. But there will be failure. Sometimes you can control it and sometimes you can’t, but you can’t give up. The north is reminding me that you can’t give up too easily.” — Farmer C, Black River-Matheson

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an in-depth analysis of the term resilience, including why this term is appropriate for research within the social sciences and of particular importance, to provide a concise definition of this term and other important terminology used throughout this dissertation. This chapter will first provide an analysis of the terms rural and community, as these terms will be used extensively throughout this study and a concise understanding of their meaning and use is important. The discussion will then focus on the term resilience, its history, relevance and critiques. From this, I will then explore the transformation of the agricultural system, linking the multifunctional model to resilience and present an overview of Old Order Mennonites. As the focus of this research is on Old Order Mennonites within rural agricultural communities, my conceptualization of both rural and community will also be provided. I will conclude this section with a resilience framework that will be utilized for an analysis of Old Order Mennonite agricultural communities in northern Ontario.
2.1 Rural

The past few decades have marked a resurrection in rural research, as the overshadowing effect of urban studies has dwindled, and academics have rediscovered the importance of studying rurality (Cloke, 1980; Parkins and Reed, 2013). As noted by Bailey et al. (2004), the complexity of issues facing rural places is only more recently recognized, given the history of urban bias and limiting effects on rural research. Problematically, rurality is often studied and defined as a dualism, implying that rural can be easily distinguished from urban and that these two areas differ greatly (Halfacree, 1993). This dualism, however, is complicated by development, in particular, as urban sprawl, suburbanization and the emergence of the rural-urban fringe blur the lines between what has traditionally been considered urban and rural. Indeed, these classifications are not definitive and provide no significant justification for the transformation from urban to rural. Interestingly, Redfield (1941) proposed the “rural-urban continuum” over seventy years ago as an alternative to such dualistic representations of urban and rural, recognizing the various conceptions that exist between these two terms. Such a continuum would assist in recognizing the complexity of rurality and limitations of dualistic definitions.

Beyond this dualism, definitions of rural are often descriptive and based on a physical location, primary industry, population size or density, among others (Hawley, Koizol and Bovaird, 2017). Further, definitions of rurality are often self-serving and fulfil specific needs, statistical definitions are geared towards socio-economic studies; administrative definitions towards political studies; built-up area definitions towards land-
use studies; functional definitions towards economic studies; agricultural definitions
towards land-use and social relation studies; and population definitions towards service
provision studies (Halfacree, 1993, 24). Part of the complications related to defining
rurality is the diversity of people, places and circumstances that are considered rural.
Statistics Canada exemplifies this complexity through a variety of definitions of rural for
policy analysis at a national level in Canada. These definitions, highlighted in Table 2.1,
vary depending on the scale of their application, whether at the local, community or
regional level (du Plessis et al., 2001). du Plessis et al. (2001) note the difficulty in
defining rurality given its consideration as a geographical concept, such as a bounded
area on a map and a social concept, such as a community, culture or way of life. It is
important to note that using any of the definitions highlighted in Table 1 would produce
significant population differences between definitions and as such, produce significantly
different results. Cromartie and Bucholtz (2008) further highlight the complications with
setting population thresholds and territorial boundaries when defining rural in the United
States. Similar to du Plessis et al. (2001), Cromartie and Bucholtz (2008) found that
each definition of rural generated significant differences in rural populations and that
researchers must be cognizant of who is included and who is excluded when defining
rurality.

Table 2.1: Alternative definitions of rural used by Statistics Canada for studies at a national level
(du Plessis et al., 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Main Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census “Rural”</td>
<td>• <strong>Population Size</strong>: Population living <em>outside</em> places of 1,000 people or more;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area”</td>
<td>OR</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Population Density:</strong> Population living <em>outside</em> places with densities of 400 or more people per square kilometre</td>
<td><strong>Labour Market Concept:</strong> Population living <em>outside</em> the main commuting zone of larger urban centres (of 10,000 or more)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Rural and Small Town”</strong> <em>(RST)</em></td>
<td><strong>Population Density:</strong> Population living <em>outside</em> places with densities of 400 or more people per square kilometre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OECD “Rural Communities”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Population Density:</strong> Population in communities with densities less than 150 people per square kilometre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OECD “Predominantly Rural Regions”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Settlement Context:</strong> Population in regions where more than 50 percent of the people live in an OECD “rural community”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Non-Metropolitan Regions”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Settlement Context:</strong> Population living outside of regions with major urban settlements of less than 50,000 or more. Non-metropolitan regions are subdivided into three groups based on settlement type and a fourth based on location in the North. The groups based on settlement type are further divided into &quot;metropolitan adjacent&quot; and &quot;non-adjacent categories&quot;. <strong>Population Size:</strong> Non-metropolitan regions include urban settlements with population of less than 50,000 people and regions with no urban settlements (where “urban settlements” are defined as places with populations of 2,500 or more)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Rural” Postal Codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rural Route Delivery Area:</strong> Areas serviced by rural route delivery from a post office or postal station. “0” in second position of a postal code denotes a “rural” postal code.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, given the complexity of defining rurality, a dualistic approach is too simplistic, and the use of the rural-urban continuum may be more appropriate. The continuum asserts that a clear contrast between rurality and urbanity does not exist but that “settlements exist along a continuum from very rural through to highly urban” (Castree, Kitchin and Rogers, 2013). Given the impacts of external forces, such as culture and politics, change within a community can be rapid and, for example, urban
influences can significantly shape a rural locale (Lichter and Brown, 2011). What is then considered rural or urban becomes more difficult as research highlights the impacts of such external forces as the urbanization of rural society (Brown and Schafft, 2011). As such, a dualistic understanding of rural and urban is not accurate. While the rural-urban continuum does offer an alternative approach to dualistic thinking, it has been heavily criticized, particularly in regard to the linkages between social patterns and geography (Halfacree, 2009). These criticisms can be attributed to Dewey (1960) and Pahl (1968), who argued that the social interactions of people residing in one community cannot be easily located on a trajectory between rural and urban, as urban people live in rural locales, rural residents live in places considered urban on the spectrum and communities exist in urban centres, characteristic of isolated rural villages. Regardless of such criticism, Halfacree (2009), however, notes that the rural-urban continuum is still a relevant term as researchers continue to investigate how space shapes social form. While it is clear that rurality is a complex term, with multiple definitions, our understanding of rurality should be based on social representations and how these arise in particular settings (Hoggart, 1990; Parkins and Reed, 2013).

Considering the diversity of meanings attached to rurality, social representations are the ideal outlet to understand how experiences define the social and physical environments that are considered rural (Halfacree, 1993; Hawley, Koizol and Bovaird, 2017). These social representations of rurality are context-specific and while particular groups share them, they do not always lead to consensus within the group (Potter and Litton, 1985). Indeed, all constructions of rurality need to be understood in terms of their
creation, dissemination, reception and reproduction (Phillips et al., 2001). In recognizing the broad spectrum of rural definitions, for the purpose of this thesis, rural will be recognized as a social construction and will not be limited by population size (Parkins and Reed, 2013).

2.2 Community

Community, like rurality, is a social construction with a variety of meanings and is embedded in social processes. The term community is commonly used in the social sciences but consensus on the meaning of community has not been achieved (Haney et al., 2015). Community refers to social systems, interactions, commonalities and relationships that can unify groups or stakeholders (Plant, 1978; Murdoch and Pratt, 1993; Ramsey and Smit, 2002; Ruiz and Domon, 2012). Community is based on experiences and mutual engagement that reflect how individuals and groups interact with landscapes, share these experiences and attach values to them (Wenger, 2000; Dakin, 2003; Gobster et al., 2007). Community is thus defined by the “socio/cultural, economic, institutional, and political structures and functions” which arise out of “a widely shared common interest” (Ramsey and Smit, 2002, 369). Communities also have distinct relationships with landscapes and the spaces in which they perform their day-to-day activities. As such, these communities share values, concerns and hopes for the development of their landscape, which are reflected in how they utilize and protect these spaces (Ruiz and Domon, 2012). According to Cutter et al. (2008), community should be considered as both the totality of social interactions but also the defined geographic space in which they occur. It is important to note that there are multiple
communities embedded within these spaces and that the complexity of such communities results in divergent goals, networks and communication (Wilson, 2010).

An example of such socially constructed groups would be agricultural communities. Farmers would dominate the social interactions found within an agricultural community, but it should be recognized that a significantly broader spectrum of stakeholders would also be involved; participants would include residents, consumers, suppliers and politicians, among others, who all help to shape the agricultural system. While this is a diverse community, their common concern for the continuation of farming, protection of agricultural land and consumption of goods creates linkages within this community (Wiebe and Wipf, 2011). It is important to note that given their social construction, communities are fluid and are constantly changing (Kais and Islam, 2016). Given its social construction, an agricultural community may evolve over time and while the central theme of the community would remain, the participants may change.

In a rural context, such communities are found in agricultural landscapes where farming is a primary industry. It should be noted that the agricultural industry is dependent upon this broad community and their economic, political and social support of the farming industry (Beingessner, 2011). Within a rural locale, these communities often have a vested interest in agriculture, given the economic importance of this industry and strong connections tied to the physical location. Our understanding of rural, therefore, cannot be separated from the social interactions that occur within communities, as these social interactions further shape and define rural locales. We can
consider, therefore, that rural agricultural communities exist physically within rural locales and socially through interactions between different participants within this community. As such, rural and community should be considered together, as they are not mutually exclusive and changes in one, undoubtedly, impact the other.

2.3 Linking Rurality, Community and Agriculture

It is important to understand that rurality and agriculture share a mutually dependent relationship in many instances. The majority of agriculture in Canada is located within rural locales, as agriculture requires larger parcels of land and activities not typically suited to an urban environment. Beyond the geographic characteristics, many rural economies are directly dependent upon agriculture. Understanding this dependence is important given the restructuring of both rural communities and the agricultural industry.

To begin, rural communities have undergone significant restructuring socially, economically and politically (Halseth et al., 2010). Major transitions related to declining and aging populations have reduced the economic viability of many small towns, particularly those dependent on natural resources (Skinner and Joseph, 2007). As a result, the viability of many of these communities is threatened, being further impacted by the continued outward migration of their residents. The economic and social impacts of rural restructuring are significant and impact the broader community through the closure of businesses and termination of a variety of services (Halseth and Ryser, 2007). Such impacts are heightened in rural communities dependent on natural resources, such as forestry, aggregates or agriculture, given the instability of global
markets and uncertainty related to weather and climate patterns, among others. Oncescu (2016), for example, found that the closure of a pulp and paper mill in a rural town in central Canada resulted in the closure of community recreation services and amenities. Further, the impacts of economic decline can also impact community participation and civic engagement in previously active rural communities, due to declining stocks of social capital (Oncescu and Giles, 2012). Many rural communities are often dependent upon a single industry for economic gains and, in times of economic crisis, impacts are often widespread, affecting all aspects of a community.

In relation to smaller-scale family farms, the restructuring of the agricultural industry has had significant and lasting impacts. For the purpose of this research, family farms refer to a farm owned by a family and small-scale implies that the majority of labour is performed by family members. Agricultural restructuring is evident throughout North America, Europe and Australia, as is exemplified by the presence of large-scale farms influenced by economies of scale. Smaller-scale family farms struggle, as larger farms dominate agrarian landscapes. In general, small and medium sized family farms have been in decline, as the average size of farms increase, while the number of farms decrease. For example, between 1996 and 2016 in Canada, while the average size of a farm increased, and the amount of land being farmed remained stable, the number of farms decreased by 30%, resulting in a decline of over 83,000 farms (Statistics Canada, 2017). Within Ontario, between 1996 and 2016, the number of farms decreased by 17,920, while the average size of a farm increased by 21% over the same time period (OMAFRA, 2017). While it is important to note that families own the majority of farms in
Ontario, the size of these farms has increased dramatically, becoming more reflective of a vertically aligned corporate farm structure due to economies of scale.

Beyond the size of the farms, a second restructuring trend impacting small-scale family farms is the globalization of agriculture. Due to international trade agreements and the resulting removal of trade barriers and many agricultural subsidies (Skogstad, 2008), small-scale family farms have been unable to compete financially in a global climate. The transition to global markets has meant increased costs and decreased profits for small-scale family farms as they are expected to compete with multinational corporations and cash crop-dominated nations (Johnsen, 2003). As a result of the drive to export-oriented agriculture, farm income remains low and many Canadian agricultural communities have experienced rapid population declines (Qualman, 2011). The elimination of subsidies and transition to global trade is not, however, unique to Canada, as in New Zealand, for example, the ruling party in the mid-1980’s determined that subsidization was unfair given new trade agreements and as a result, eliminated grants to farmers (Johnsen, 2003). Agricultural deregulation followed and the next decade was largely considered a rural downturn, as land values declined, income was dramatically reduced and costs continued to rise (Reynolds and Moore, 1990). As a result, a mass exodus from family farms occurred as smaller-scale agriculture could not survive without government funding or compete against global agriculture (Johnsen, 2003). In addition, many rural areas also faced decline, as the demise of small-scale farmers negatively impacted local economies dependent upon the agricultural industry. While agricultural land values and commodity prices have increased significantly from this
time (Valco, 2016), the negative agricultural environment of the 1980s has had lasting impacts on small-scale family farmers, as farms continue to increase in size, while the number of farmers continues to decrease (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Considering the case in New Zealand and loss of many agricultural subsidies in Canada, Potter and Tilzey (2007) note that small-scale farmers deserve state assistance because “without farmers, the communities and environmental endowments of the countryside would no longer be sustainable or meaningful in wider social terms” (p. 1297). The negative impacts associated with rural and agricultural restructuring are evident at the community level through the decline of populations, services and economies. Further, the restructuring of the agricultural industry has directly impacted small-scale family farmers as they cannot compete with global markets and are acutely sensitive to the cost-price squeeze, where costs increase and profits decrease (Krueger, 2000). It is important to understand that small-scale family farms are often engrained within rural communities economically, socially and politically. Globally, it has been found that these farms play crucial roles in food security and regional development (Galdeano-Gómez, Pérez-Mesa and Godoy-Durán, 2016; Graeub, 2016). Given the important interrelationships associated with rurality and agriculture, the restructuring of both systems has had significant impacts on small-sale family farms and this farm structure cannot be separated from rural agricultural communities. For smaller-scale family farms that remain in rural communities, their long-term viability and, ultimately, resilience must be understood.
2.4 Resilience

The term resilience is mostly directly linked to ecology and was defined by Holling (1973) as the amount of change that can impact a system before it adapts to a different state. While the term is used broadly in ecology and a variety of other disciplines, the meaning of the term and its application are largely contested (Adger, 2000). Resilience is a complicated term for social scientists, as its transition from ecology and its use across a broad range of disciplines has resulted in multiple definitions. Given the broad appeal of the term, its meaning has been altered depending on the nature of research and study goals. In the social sciences, resilience has been applied to studies in psychology (Greene, Glambos and Lee, 2003; Powley, 2009), regional geography (Martin, 2012), engineering (Hollnagel et al., 2006) and social ecology (Ross and Berkes, 2014), among others. This broad applicability has resulted in a variety of definitions, evolving from Holling’s initial conception in 1973.

Resilience can be viewed as the ability of a system to adapt to changes or hazards and its ability to persist without altering its basic structure (Lyon, 2014). The use of resilience in social-ecology is of particular importance, given its recognition of human impacts within natural systems. Socio-ecological resilience is defined by van der Leeuw (2000: 359) as the “capacity to lead a continued existence by incorporating structural change.” Use of the term ‘capacity’ acknowledges human interaction and resulting changes to overall structure. Adger (2000) has linked social and ecological resilience through human dependence on natural ecosystems and the economic activities they create, noting that social resilience can be examined through economic
and demographic changes. Much research has been done on the resilience of communities dependent on the natural environment, including coastal communities (Walker et al., 2009), agricultural communities (Milestad and Darnhofer, 2008; Tanaka, 2014; Tendall et al., 2015; Sumane et al., 2018) and rural communities (Yilmaz, 2014; Freshwater, 2015). Considering the conception of resilience within ecology, assessing resilience within communities dependent on the natural environment is appropriate.

While definitions of resilience vary, it has become an important term within academia, especially in relation to sustainability. For some, sustainability is limited as it focuses on a particular time and place, as well as periods of inactivity (Davidson, 2010). As systems are complex, they must be viewed as constantly evolving at different times and scales (Holling et al., 2002) and as such, sustainability is no longer an appropriate lens. Resilience, it has been argued, recognizes the multiple scales that impact systems and that change is a constant process (Davidson, 2010). Resilience is viewed as a process, given the recognition that systems are not static and that interactions and adaptations within a system are constantly occurring at a variety of scales (Walker et al., 2004). Resilience theory, Reid (2015) argues, can be applied to any system, social or ecological, given its dynamic systems framework. The recognition of change is significant as it demonstrates that systems are not stable and that, to be resilient, change or adaptation is necessary in order to persist over time (Darnhofer et al., 2016).

Further complicating our understanding of the term resilience is the use of additional terminology that is often interchanged and uncritically applied. Of particular importance are the terms vulnerability and adaptive capacity. Interpretations of
resilience and use of the above terms, have been explored by researchers (Manyena, 2006; Proag, 2014; Ross and Berkes, 2014; Southwick et al., 2014), highlighting the difficulty and confusion associated with resilience research. Before a definition of resilience can be provided for this study, the terms vulnerability and adaptive capacity must be explored. Similar to resilience, vulnerability has been defined by a variety of researchers, with nuanced differences in meaning and application (Gallopín, 2006; Proag, 2014). Vulnerability can be considered the level of susceptibility a system or organism is to harm, including external stresses, risks, sensitivity and exposure, among other variables (Bhamra et al., Proag, 2014). Gallopín (2006) has differentiated vulnerability from resilience with the former being a system’s capacity to preserve and the latter, its capacity to recover. While this differentiation in terms is helpful, vulnerability is often viewed as the opposite to resilience, as increased vulnerability decreases resilience (Freshwater, 2015). As depicted in Figure 2.1 (below), resilience and vulnerability are often viewed on a continuum as polar opposites. This view, however, is quite limiting as vulnerability may encourage adaptation, thus demonstrating resilience. Similar to resilience, vulnerability is viewed as a complex and dynamic component that impacts resilience based on a system’s adaptive capacity (Dalziell and McManus, 2004; Adger, 2006; Gallopín, 2006; Bhamra et al., 2011;).
Adaptive capacity is considered a system’s ability to change as a result of a risk or an actual hazard and is a mechanism of resilience (Bhamra et al., 2011) that continually responds to changes (Lyon, 2014) and includes the social and physical resources within a system (Reid, 2015). Walker et al. (2004) link adaptability to the capacity of actors to influence resilience and within social-ecology, noting that adaptive capacity is dependent on individuals and groups that manage the system. Further, adaptive capacity includes the ability to accommodate risks, overcome hazards and evolve in order to improve resilience, through novelty and learning (Bhamra et al., 2011). “Adaptive capacity reflects the ability of the system to respond to changes in its external environment and to recover from damage to internal structures within the system that affect the ability to achieve its purpose” (Dalziell and McManus, 2004). Adaptive capacity is considered a mechanism for achieving resilience and also for creating new systems or structures as a response to stress (Fiksel, 2006). Vulnerability, adaptive capacity and resilience should be viewed together when looking at a system, as each. While vulnerability impacts a system’s resilience, it cannot be viewed on a continuum as vulnerability does not necessarily decrease resilience. While some
systems may be more vulnerable than others, vulnerability impacts both adaptive capacity and resilience (Gallopín, 2006; Cutter et al., 2008; Maru et al., 2014).

Considering these terms, resilience can be viewed as a function of system vulnerability and adaptive capacity (Dalziell and McManus, 2004). Important characteristics within resilience include a systems diversity, efficiency, adaptability and cohesion (Fiksel, 2003). When taken together, these characteristics identify vulnerabilities and capacity for change. In order to understand how vulnerability and adaptive capacity function within a resilience framework, Figure 2.2 provides a conceptual diagram of the components within resilience theory and how they interact. Of importance is the acknowledgement that vulnerability is not the antithesis of resilience but is a component within the resilience system, which must be considered as part of a resilience evaluation (Gallopín, 2006).

It is also important to understand that the resilience framework is built around cycles, relationships, systems and information flows and that the system is constantly evolving through interactions with elements both internal and external to the system and responses to these interactions are a result of human agency (Davidson, 2010). The
recognition of human impacts within social and ecological systems is important, as resilience is impacted by social, cultural, economic and environmental capital. The various relationships and individual actions within a social system have the ability to build not only individual resilience but broader community resilience as well (Eachus, 2014).

Further relevance of resilience theory within the social sciences is the acknowledgement of scale (Gallopín, 2006). Social systems are complex and community interactions, decisions and adaptations must be considered from a variety of levels (Adger, 2000). While a social system may be of interest at one particular scale, it must be viewed as a subsystem and the interactions at both the scales above and below must be examined (Walker et al., 2004). For example, if community resilience is of primary interest, the scale below community, the individual level, and above, perhaps a regional level, must be included within the study, as both scales impact the community level. For a system to demonstrate strong resilience, there must be connections across scales that permit information sharing and capacity adaptation, while also maintaining autonomy to prevent complete structural transformation (Davidson, 2010). The importance of scale within resilience is often evident during times of crisis, such as natural disasters. For example, after a tornado hit the town of Goderich, located in southwestern Ontario, in 2011, adaptive capacity was influenced by actors at the local, county and provincial level (Reid, 2015; Laycock and Caldwell, 2017). While the town’s recovery from the damage caused by the tornado took some time, the town’s resilience was demonstrated through the strength of relationships across and within various
scales, which enhanced its adaptive capacity. These relationships and interactions across a variety of scales is unique within social systems and, in recognizing this, resilience theory can be utilized in studies on social systems.

While resilience theory has been utilized in the social sciences and much research regarding its value has been discussed, the term has been contested by some academics who are hesitant of its broad applicability. For example, Davidson (2010) suggests that resilience was developed within ecological systems that are less complex than social systems and, as such, the term requires further critical assessment before it can be applied to human systems. According to Cannon and Muller-Mahn (2010), resilience focuses on the scientific and technical aspects of a system and fails to properly assess human agency and social interactions. Cannon and Muller-Mahn (2010) focus their research on climate change and, understandably, the human and social interactions within that field cannot be ignored when studying resilience.

There are multiple relationships within social systems, and both individual and collective agency impact adaptive capacity. Folke et al. (2010) state that foundational to resilience theory is the maintenance of the original structure during times of adaptation but transformation may occur, resulting in a new structure. According to Walker et al. (2004), transformation occurs when the current system can no longer be maintained and, as noted by Berkhout (2006), resilience is not always the desirable outcome. The differences between resilience and transformation are often ignored and transformation may be viewed as proof of resilience. Such transformational change, while necessary or desired in some social systems, is not foundational within the resilience framework.
Resilience research has also been criticized for its tendency to be positively focused, without an assessment of both benefits and drawbacks (Smith and Stirling, 2010). Resilience has also been criticized as a platform to push particular interests and marginalize others, thus leading to increased vulnerability amongst certain groups or places (Bahadur and Tanner, 2014). The lack of critical analysis within the use and acceptance of the term resilience appears to be its greatest weakness. Its broad, seemingly global application across disciplines and at a variety of scales, without critical reflection of the limitations of resilience reduces the value of resilience-based research. Maclean, Cuthill and Ross (2014) highlight the knowledge gap related to the social aspects of resilience as it transitions from ecology into the social sciences. Some researchers have identified the need for empirical studies that assesses the claims of resilience theory and incorporate human agency within the resilience framework (Davidson, 2010; Bhamra et al., 2011). Therefore, the value of the term resilience should not diminish but should be applied critically within the social sciences, utilizing empirical studies to test applicability.

Adger (2000) was one of the first scholars to identify the value of resilience research within the social sciences given the reliance of many social groups on the natural environment, particularly related to livelihoods dependent on natural resources. It is recognized, however, that individual and collective agency are complex in comparison to the functioning of the natural environment and this complexity must be acknowledged when resilience theory is applied to social systems. When exploring resilience within social ecological systems, the impacts of a number of unique attributes
must be considered: vision, leadership and trust, social networks, knowledge transfer and governance (Folke, 2003; Folke, 2006; Lebel et al., 2006; Buikstra et al., 2010; Brown and Westaway, 2011, Berkes and Ross, 2013). These characteristics are unique to social systems and will impact an individual or community’s vulnerability, adaptive capacity and, ultimately, resilience. Resilience theory offers a lens for understanding the relationship between humans and the natural environment (Walker and Salt, 2012). In accepting the complexity of social systems and acknowledging these inherent differences with ecological systems, resilience theory can be utilized within the social sciences (Maclean, Cuthill and Ross, 2014) and demonstrates the relevance of Adger’s (2000) research within resilient social ecological systems nearly two decades ago.

While criticisms of resilience theory are evident, its value within the social sciences can be further demonstrated through additional research. Resilience is deemed a valuable theoretical framework for social research but in transferring a term from ecology to the social sciences, human agency, scale and social interactions must be clearly articulated within its conceptualization. As such, in using the conceptual term ‘resilience’ in this research, a strong social basis will be recognized and moving forward, the following definition of resilience will be used: *resilience is the capacity of a social system to adapt to hazards and vulnerabilities based on the impacts of human agency at a variety of scales*. This definition is appropriate for research on agricultural communities, as it recognizes the importance of social interactions at a variety of scales and that resilience is an evolving process and not a static state. A conceptual diagram of the components within a resilience framework is provided in Figure 2.3.
2.4.1 Linking Resilience and Agriculture

When considering agriculture, resilience is an appropriate term given its foundation in ecology and the ecological basis of farming. As ecology recognizes that a system is in a constant state of flux, it should also be recognized that agriculture, dependent on the natural environment, is in a similar state (Hammond, Berardi and Green, 2013). In fact, the agricultural system is not stable and given the internal and external influences on both the industry as a whole, and the individual farm, the agricultural system is constantly undergoing changes to the political, economic and environmental structures (Milestad and Darnhofer, 2008). The resilience of agriculture is most obviously demonstrated by farmers, as they must buffer shocks while also adapting to changes in the structure of agriculture and operation of the farm (Darnhofer, 2014). Moreover, the farming system is viewed as evolving, as a farmer is always adapting to changes within the system, making decisions that impact their own sustainability and perceptions of the agricultural system (Aerni, 2009).
What is unique with agricultural resilience is a farmer’s reliance on past experience and accumulated knowledge, thus allowing them to adapt to each situation and make decisions that impact farm viability (Darnhofer et al., 2016). This resilience enables farmers to continue their agricultural endeavours and adapt to both external and internal changes impacting the farm, their livelihoods, and future operations at a variety of scales (Hammond, Berardi and Green, 2013). Research within the social sciences has applied resilience theory to a variety of agricultural topics including farm size (Hammond, Berardi and Green, 2013), impacts of drought (Keil et al., 2008), coastal fisheries (Marshall and Marshall, 2007), agricultural communities (McManus et al., 2012), organic agriculture (Milestead and Darnhofer, 2008) and family farms (Forney and Stock, 2013). Such research is important, as it demonstrates the importance of resilience theory beyond ecology but also explores the linkages between the natural environment and human agency. While research regarding agricultural resilience is diverse, the applicability of this concept within northern Ontario has not yet been explored.

2.5 Resilient Family Farms: Productivism, Post-productivism and Multifunctional Agriculture

In order to understand the importance of studying agricultural resilience, it is necessary to analyze the historic transition of the agricultural system in Canada. Of particular interest for this research is the transformation of family farms as economies of scale result in larger individual farms, but fewer individual farmers. Many rural communities are dependent upon agriculture and the transformation of the agricultural
system has impacted their future longevity. In particular, the transition to larger farms has resulted in fewer individual farms and fewer farmers, resulting in population decline in many rural locales. The transformation of agriculture and linkages with resilience will be provided in the following section. It will begin with an examination of productivist, post-productivist and multifunctional agriculture and situate family farms within this production spectrum. Resilience will be positioned within the discussion of multifunctional agriculture, as diversification and other income generating activities are viewed as necessary for family farm viability.

While family farms are an integral part of many rural locales and agricultural communities, the nature of farming has changed and some of these farms have moved from places of production to places of consumption (Mather et al., 2006). As some family farms no longer engage only in the production of food, the rural countryside has become a landscape utilized for leisure and tourism activities, among others. Given the high costs associated with agricultural inputs, lower returns and an apparent need to increase in size to become profitable, production-centric agriculture is more commonly associated with a corporate farm structure, as farming is no longer a lifestyle and, instead, is considered a business model (Jay, 2007). It is interesting to note that some small-scale, intensive farms (greenhouses, for example), follow a productivist model and can also be quite profitable given their specialization and intensive use of the land (OMAFRA, 2016b). This productivist system, while common in the 1950s, has transitioned and is no longer synonymous with agriculture as a whole. When
considering the farming model more common to family farms, a transition away from productivism is common (McDonagh, 2013).

2.5.1 Productivist Agriculture

Productivist agriculture is limited to the productive capabilities of farmland and is often associated with the corporatization of farming or agri-business, due to a focus on maximizing production (Ilbery and Bowler, 1998; Wilson, 2001; Burton, 2004). Lowe et al (1993) define productivism as “a commitment to an intensive, industrially driven and expansionist agriculture with state support based primarily on output and increased productivity” (p. 221). Generally associated with agricultural practices following World War II, productivism marked a time of high and continually increasing yields and a necessity to focus on increased production above all else (Evans and Morris, 1997; Gray and Lawrence, 2001; Wilson, 2001). According to Jay (2007), with productivist agriculture, “farms are subordinate to food processing, manufacturing and marketing structures. At the same time, due to technology, they have power to influence the physical environment to an ever-increasing degree” (p. 268). While the farm is only viewed in terms of productive capacity, productivist agriculture is characterized by three unique characteristics: concentration, intensification and specialization (Bowler, 1985).

First, the concentration of agriculture is demonstrated by the consolidation of small farms and a resulting increase in output (Ilbery and Bowler, 1998). This concentration is easily demonstrated through farm statistics which show a declining farm population and fewer farms with significantly higher farm yields. In fact, in the United Kingdom, between 1941 and 1998, the number of farmers decreased by fifty-two
percent, while the area farmed only decreased by twelve percent (Walford, 2003). Between 2010 and 2015, the land utilized for agriculture and total area of arable crops continued to decline, as did farms 100 hectares and under (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2016). In Canada, similar results are evident as the average farm size has increased from 779 acres in 2011 to 820 acres in 2016 and between 1996 and 2016, the number of farms decreased by 30%, while the amount of land being farmed reduced by only 6% (Statistics Canada, 2018). In terms of farm operators, it is interesting to note that while the average age of a farmer increased to 55 years between 2011 and 2016, there was also a 3% increase in the number of farmers under the age of 35. This age group has not experienced an increase since 1991 (Statistics Canada, 2018).

Second, agricultural intensification is measured by the increase in farm inputs and outputs per hectare of farmland (Ilbery and Bowler, 1998). Productivist agriculture encourages intensification through the use of machinery and chemical fertilizers and a shift towards crops and livestock that are in high demand globally. This global demand is necessary, as the local level could not consume the high yields of food generated on productivist farms (Walford, 2003). The system is often compared to Fordism, which is a labour model from the early-1900s based on mechanization, hierarchical decision making, mass production and a focus on efficiencies related to time management (Wilson, 2007). Productivist agriculture is viewed similarly to Fordism given management practices of reducing labour, increasing production and, ultimately, mounting profits (Gray and Lawrence, 2001; Wilson, 2007). The intensity of such
agricultural systems often incurs criticism related to environmental impacts, as, for example, productivist dairy operations in New Zealand have resulted in the loss of native plants and animals, and contamination of groundwater, rivers, lakes and other wetlands (Boothroyd et al., 2000; Burns et al., 2000; Duncanson et al., 2000; Jay, 2007). Further, Lawrence et al. (2013), noted that farmland in Australia has suffered from the impacts of intensive, chemically dependent productivist agriculture, as the soil has been degraded due to salinization and acidification. Such environmental issues are common within the productivist model as the intensified farm system is dependent on high chemical inputs.

Lastly, Ilbery and Bowler (1998) argue that specialization occurs not only through the limitation of products, but also the tasks required of the labour force, machinery used and, ultimately, the land use. Productivist farms often require large capital inputs, such as machinery, fertilizers and pesticides. The high costs of these inputs are a result of the large-scale farm endeavours and reflect the corporate nature of this farm structure. Furthermore, this specialization results in a significant reduction in biodiversity as crop and livestock specialization rely on hybridization and monocropping (Kuyek, 2007).

While it does appear that the global market demands such high yielding, capital intensive agriculture, scholars have criticized many aspects of this system. One such criticism has been termed the agricultural treadmill by scholars and refers to the constant battle of productivist agriculture to increase yields (Goodman and Redclift, 1991; Clunies-Ross and Hildyard, 1992; Gray and Lawrence, 2001). The agricultural
treadmill highlights the continuous struggle to produce and the resulting survival strategies adopted by farmers to increase yields, such as technology, machinery and labour (Pile, 1991). Rosin (2013) notes, however, that the agricultural treadmill benefited capitalist interests through the development of a number of mechanisms that improved yields, such as hybridized and genetically modified crops, as well as chemicals for controlling pests. While it can be argued that farmers have benefited from the research and development associated with productivist agriculture and the capitalist system, farmers are often forced to be passive agents in this food system with no mechanisms for change (Ward, 1993; Rosin, 2013). Further, Freudenburg (1992) has warned that as costs increase while prices for commodities decrease, the production of goods may cease. Known as the “cost-price squeeze”, small-scale family farmers are most impacted by such economic hardship as the high costs of inputs and low returns on agricultural goods produce little profit. A number of researchers have explored the impacts of the cost-price squeeze on agriculture (Krueger, 1965; Elo and Beale, 1985; Smith and Marsden, 2004; Sutherland, 2011), with Krueger (2000) noting the costs of some chemical inputs tripling or quadrupling in price, and the cost consumers pay being four times higher than the price fruit growers received for their produce. Further, Krueger (2000) also found that as a response to the cost-price squeeze, many fruit farmers increased the scale and intensity of their farms, thus giving into economies of scale in order to remain profitable. Such differences in costs and returns is significant and, while Stedman et al. (2004) note significant variation by region, farm type and farm size, the impacts on small-scale family farms are significant.
While the ecologically destructive force of productivist agriculture is evident (Harvey, 1997; Potter, 1998; Gray and Lawrence, 2001; McKenzie and Williams, 2015; Geertsema et al., 2016), scholars also note that this agricultural system is problematic socially, as the farms are not connected to rural communities. Indeed, as this system is based upon global demands, it often operates at a global scale (Whatmore, 1995; Cheshire and Woods, 2013). While this structure of agriculture has historically been impacted minimally by legislation, environmental regulations and planning policies have limited the scale of productivist farms (Marsden, 1998). Walford (2003) found that even with new regulations and public outcry, this form of agriculture continues to dominate. While the negative consequences of productivist agriculture are apparent, productivist agriculture has continued and can be attributed to the current political economy. In fact, the liberalized global market has placed productivist agriculture in a primary role, given the large yields and profit potential (Le Heron, 1993; Moran et al., 1993; Walford, 2003). The importance of productivism, has, however, been linked to food security and the global food system. Rosin (2013), for example, found that in New Zealand, a need to continually increase yields as a result of increasing demands reinforced farmers’ commitments to productivist agriculture and provided little motivation for an alternative farm structure. The global food system and issues of food security have heightened the need for increased yields and, consequently, the apparent need for productivist agriculture.


2.5.2 Post-productivist Agriculture

While much of the current agricultural system still follows productivist ideals, scholars argue that small-scale agriculture has shifted towards post-productivism. Post-productivism made significant gains in the 1990s and is associated with social and economic transformations within the countryside (Halfacree, 1997; Marsden, 1999). Due to the lingering impacts of the farm crisis in the 1980s, the debt loads of many farmers could no longer support the input-intensive productivist farm model (Ward, 1993; Walford, 2003; Wilson, 2009). Sharpley and Vass (2006) note that farmers were also influenced by the environmental movement, issues associated with oversupply, lack of farm subsidies and health concerns associated with the chemical dependent productivist model. As a result of these issues, an alternative farm model was sought and a transition away from productivism, or to a “post” system, is evident.

Post-productivist agriculture is generally associated with less capital-intensive agricultural practices, a decreasing reliance on chemical inputs and smaller-scale farming practices (Wilson, 2009). It is a move away from industrial agriculture or agribusiness and provides an opportunity for family farms to find alternative uses for agricultural landscapes beyond the production of goods (Marsden, 1999). Lowe et al. (1993) found that post-productivism was characterized by the declining value placed on agriculture by society and the marginalized political place, evidenced by the removal of subsidies and other funding opportunities. While productivist agricultural activities exist due to global demands, post-productivist agriculture emerged in contradiction to global pressures and is often viewed dualistically with productivism (Wilson, 2007).
Within the post-productivist model, the agricultural landscape is viewed as a place of consumption and not production. Wilson (2001; 2009a) notes that post-productivist agriculture places a greater emphasis on rural space and non-agricultural practices. Under productivist agriculture, farmers are viewed as destroyers of the land, given the high level of inputs, while post-productivist agriculture recognizes a shift to farmers as land stewards (Wilson, 2001; Holmes, 2002). The protection of this landscape means that agriculture is no longer viewed as a place of production; the rural agricultural landscape is viewed instead as a place to be protected and consumed. McHenry (1996) found that this transformation was a result of new representations of rurality by the media. Indeed, the emergence of the rural idyll, considered a romanticized vision of rural landscapes, has furthered the post-productivist system. As rural agricultural landscapes were viewed as pastoral and bucolic, the landscape became a consumable place for recreation and leisure (Woods, 2011). Many post-productivist farmers recognize the economic value of the landscape and seek ways to turn their farms into places of consumption, selling an experience instead of a product. It can be argued, however, that urban values of post-productivist agriculture create an unrealistic countryside influenced by consumer demands of an idolized farming landscape and not a reflection of reality (Lowe et al., 1993; Halfacree, 1999; Daugstad, 2007). Indeed, as farms are viewed in terms of the experience they offer, farmers are viewed as custodians of their land, who must maintain the idolised version of agriculture in order to sell an “authentic” experience (Hall, Kirkpatrick and Mitchell, 2005; Daugstad et al., 2006). While social demands for agricultural landscapes can be unrealistic, Parra-
Lopez et al. (2008) note that such demands can be valuable and can be incorporated into a sustainable farm model.

Post-productivist agriculture emerged out of conflict with the productivist system of agriculture and is most often characterized as: dispersed instead of concentrated, extensive instead of intensive and diversified instead of specialized. It is important to note, however, that criticisms associated with the simplicity of this definition exist, as Walford (2003) notes that not all post-productivist agriculture has achieved these three characteristics. Furthermore, the use of the term “post” implies a transition away from productivism. Ilbery and Bowler (1998) and Walford (2003) further find that there is no evidence to conclude that farmers have made significant movements towards a post-productivist system. Wilson (2001) contends that limited financial incentives, global pressures associated with internationally available products and policies that favour economies of scale further limit the movement away from productivism.

Weaknesses also exist regarding the failure to recognize the concurrent roles of both productivism and post-productivism (Bjørkhaug and Richards, 2008). Wilson (2001) argues that this is the largest flaw with the productivist/post-productivist dualism, as there is extensive evidence documenting both models functioning at the same time. Morris and Evans (1999) further criticize the post-productivist movement, arguing that productivism still exists and that no significant shift in agricultural production has occurred. Post-productivism has also been criticized for its failure to recognize the multiple roles and functions of agriculture (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 1997) and Wilson (2001) argues that post-productivism does not adequately theorize the complexity of the
agricultural system and fails to recognize the various scales, localities and functions that agriculture fulfills. Furthermore, scholars have demonstrated that competing rural agricultural dynamics may exist beyond post-productivism (Marsden, 2003; Holmes, 2006) and that current government regimes continue to support the productivist system (Potter and Tilzey, 2005).

Post-productivism also posits that the transition from productivism occurred along a linear path with a clear trajectory, a theory that is often criticized (Wilson, 2007). Indeed, Evans et al. (2002) argue that productivist processes are, in reality, being reversed and that the implications of “post” are unjustified. Potter and Tilzey (2005) recognize that many farms participate in both productivist and non-productivist agricultural activities and, considering this, Robinson (2004) suggested that the “post” was accepted without adequate analysis. Agricultural change is comprised of complex processes (Knickel and Renting, 2000) and different networks, actors and relationships impact each rural locale at varying temporal and spatial scales (Marsden, 2003). Wilson (2004) argues that “post-productivism may only… be a theoretical construct in the minds of academics, rather than an expression of reality on the ground” (p.481). As such, the term non-productivism has been suggested as a better reflection of the transition away from productivist agricultural structures, as it recognizes the temporal, spatial and global influences on agriculture (Wilson, 2007).

In abandoning this duality, Wilson (2007) has suggested a spectrum of decision making, with productivism on one side and non-productivism on the other. Such a spectrum recognizes that farmers may employ a number of productivist and non-
productivist strategies on their farm and that such strategies arise through the decision-making process. This spectrum is similar to Duram's (1997) farmer decision-making continuum and Morris and Potter's (1995) farmer policy participation spectrum. Wilson (2007) argues that this spectrum recognizes the complexity of decision-making and “acknowledges the flexibility and fluidity of agricultural action and thought” (p. 174).

Similar to post-productivism, non-productivism is characterized by high environmental sustainability, is embedded within local communities and is highly diversified, among others. The two terms differ, however, with the recognition that agriculture is a process that is in a state of flux, depending on temporal and spatial conditions and changes arise through the decision-making process (Wilson, 2007).

Considering the criticisms of both productivism and post-productivism, including the constraints related to defining agricultural activities in dualistic terms and the failure to recognize the multiple functions of agriculture, it is evident that many family farms do not fit into either agricultural system. In considering the inadequacy of the term “post” and utilization of “non” as a better reflection of the transition from productivist agriculture, these two farm structures are still at two extreme ends of the agricultural spectrum. As such, it is necessary to consider the multifunctionality of agriculture, which “better encapsulates the diversity, non-linearity and spatial heterogeneity that can currently be observed in modern agriculture and rural society” (Wilson, 2007, 177). Considering this, the remainder of this chapter will explore the meaning of multifunctionality as it relates to family farms and conclude with a discussion on the importance of understanding the impacts of policy on this agricultural structure.
2.5.3 Multifunctional Agriculture

The limitations associated with the productivism/post-productivism dualism and failure to recognize the occurrence of both productive and consumptive agricultural landscapes have been addressed through the recognition of multifunctionality (Wilson, 2001). As family farms struggle to survive with shrinking profits, rising costs and reduced access to markets, many of these farmers have found multifunctional uses for their land and methods to diversify their sources of on-farm income. Prior to the notion of multifunctionality and the ‘consumption’ of the landscape, many farmers sought income diversification strategies as a farm viability tactic. Termed pluriactivity, it includes all sources of income, both on and off the farm, and by all members of the farm household (Sofer, 2001). Further, it is important to understand that pluriactivity includes all formal and informal work activities that result in cash income, or other in-kind repayment, such as labour exchanges (Fuller, 1990). This term is beneficial in that it recognizes that in some instances, the farm is not the primary source of income and off-farm income is necessary to support a farm household (Evans and Illbery, 1993). Prior to this, farmers who sought off-farm income were misleadingly deemed as part-time farmers and as such, garnered little attention from the research community (Bryden and Fuller, 1988). In reality many of these farms were operated on a full-time basis but farm households were in need of supplemental income (Fuller, 1990). Marsden et al. (1986) noted that income strategies varied by farmer based on their business model and was a representation of adaptation to shrinking farm profits. As the return on traditional farm income declined, typically through the sale of crops and livestock, farmers were forced
to seek alternative income sources and decisions to seek off-farm income varied by farmer. Evans and Ilbery (1993) argued that off-farm income often offered a more substantial source of income than on-farm diversified activities. For example, when examining pluriactivity in Israel, Sofer (2001) found that pluriactivity, specifically off-farm employment, was the only option for farmers who could not intensify their farm operation to generate additional revenue. While off-farm income generation has become a viable farm strategy for some farmers, on-farm diversification strategies offer an alternative.

According to Gorman et al. (2001) on-farm diversification includes non-production-based activities that provide a farmer new sources of income. Diversification typically refers to alternative farm endeavours (Ilbery, 1991; Pascotto, 2006; Meraner et al., 2015), and is a method of providing farmers with varied income sources to combat the reduced profitability of their main productive commodity (Oppermann, 1998; Bagi and Reeder, 2012; Joo et al., 2013). A variety of diversification activities exist, both at the farm gate – such as, roadside produce stands, agritourism activities and wineries, among others – and secondary uses not related to the farm, such as manufacturing activities, carpentry shops and other services. For the purposes of this thesis, diversification activities will broadly relate to any activity that provides supplementary income opportunities beyond the primary agricultural use at the farm level as a strategy to maintain a viable farm. While farm diversification activities are quite broad and vary by farm, such activities are often utilized as a risk management strategy, providing opportunities for a potentially stable income source (Meraner et al., 2015). It is this
diversification into a variety of productivist and non-productivist agricultural activities that can sustain family farms and encourage the viability of the family farm model.

To begin, the multifunctionality of agrarian landscapes occurs as farms move from being places of production to places of consumption. While post-productivism focuses solely on the consumption of the landscape, multifunctionality recognizes the necessity to produce and opportunities for consumptive uses of the farm landscape (Wilson, 2001). Cairol et al. (2009) found that multifunctional agriculture fulfils a variety of functions beyond the provision of food and Renting et al. (2009) note that these functions include services and niche markets, among others. It is commonly recognized, therefore, that multifunctional agriculture provides a variety of benefits beyond the production of food and fibre (OECD, 2001; Brummel and Nelson, 2014). Further, Mander et al. (2007) note the heterogeneity of agricultural landscapes and the variety of functions, at times contradictory, that are fulfilled. It is important to note that agricultural multifunctionality is not limited only to agricultural activities at the farm level, as it can include natural landscape features, such as hedgerows (Burel, 1996), forests (Pandey, 2002) and wetlands (Kruk, 2003), which enhance natural habitats and provide recreational opportunities, among others (Mander et al., 2007). It is interesting to note, however, that the environmental benefits of some multifunctional farms often serve the needs or desires of urban areas and city dwellers but that the value of such services is rarely recognized (Plieninger et al., 2007).

Multifunctional agriculture has been studied broadly by scholars and has included topics such as the diversity of strategies adopted by farm households (Van der Ploeg
2000; Van der Ploeg, 2003); the impacts of multifunctionality on biodiversity (Primdahl, 1999; Busck, 2002; Schmitzberger et al., 2005); and how social cohesion is maintained through multifunctional agriculture (Dax and Hovorka, 2004). Moving beyond the environment, the economic benefits of multifunctionality allow family farmers to minimize risk by spreading resources across a variety of farm endeavours (Van der Ploeg, 2003). Further, van der Heide et al. (2007) link multifunctional agriculture to the concept of sustainability, both environmentally, through agro-biodiversity, and economically, through entrepreneurial opportunities. An important difference between the corporate model of productivism and multifunctionality is the understanding that multifunctional agriculture is ‘agriculture as a lifestyle’ and not a business model (Wilson, 2001).

2.5.3.1.1 Multifunctional Ruralities

As multifunctionality refers to both the production and consumption of the landscape, it is important to first explore how agricultural landscapes are consumed and what values are attached to these landscapes. Farms are often promoted based on their location, the natural features they offer, and tourism-related services that provide economic diversification (Oreddegbe and Fadeyibi, 2009). Considering the multiple meanings attached to the term rural, the ‘rural idyll’ is often marketed to non-farm residents for consumptive land use purposes. The rural idyll is defined as a social representation of bucolic landscapes and is recognized by scholars as being a social construction from an outsider’s perspective (Yarwood, 2005; Woods, 2011). The rural idyll has significant impacts on multifunctional family farms, as agriculture is often
considered a demarcation of rurality and images of farming are frequently proffered as representative of the rural countryside (Jones, 1995). The rural idyll, while often constructed by non-farmers, has been utilized within agriculture for marketing purposes. Phillips et al. (2001), for example, explored the role of media in creating the image of a bucolic countryside and the acceptance of such meanings by individuals. Indeed, media has an integral role in constructing the rural idyll and promoting rural locales as places of consumption that can be used, transformed or manipulated (van Dam et al., 2002; Horton, 2008; Heley and Jones, 2012).

Beyond the media, the rural idyll has also been politicized through legislation and policy papers. In particular, Ontario’s *Greenbelt Act* (2005) has been viewed as a politicization of the rural idyll. Tensions, in particular, have arisen, as competing views of the countryside among farmers, residents, developers and politicians have created “clashes between romantic ideals of countryside within contemporary farming practices” (Cadieux et al., 2013, p. 310). The *Greenbelt Act* has, however, gone beyond the social construction of rurality, as the protection of rural landscapes has constructed a physical locality. While earlier discussions have focused on the social construction of rurality, and difficulty in creating boundaries between socially constructed areas known as rural, fringe, suburban and urban (Halfacree, 1993), the *Greenbelt Act* has clearly delineated areas as protected countryside. While this set boundary is based on agricultural land, it insinuates that the countryside can be easily delineated and is markedly different from the unprotected, adjacent landscape (Cadieux et al., 2013). Such boundaries are
problematic, as they seem to insinuate that the countryside, as defined by the Greenbelt Act, is composed only of agricultural land.

It is important to understand that the rural idyll is a social construction that has been utilized by a variety of stakeholders to promote the consumption of agricultural land and, through policies such as the Greenbelt Act in Ontario, protect the land as well. Further, the clashes noted by Cadieux et al. (2013) are not uncommon and have become a significant problem when the marketed view of the rural idyll does not meet the expectations of new residents (Sharpe and Smith, 2003; Epp and Fullerton, 2014). Shepard (1996, p. 244) even referred to such landscapes as “bucolic fiction” as they are romanticized images that are not accurately reflective of farming lifestyles.

2.5.3.2 Multifunctional Activities

Regardless of these tensions, multifunctional farms utilize the rural idyll for diversification purposes and often sell the landscape as a commodity through agritourism (Che et al., 2005). Multifunctional farms that include tourist-based goods and services can be broad, including pick-your-own produce, tractor rides, festivals, retail outlets and wineries among others (Hankins, 1997; Traversac et al., 2011). Beyond these products and services, on-farm accommodation is also an important component of agritourism as the farm lifestyle is sold to tourists (Evans and Ilbery, 1992a).

Much research regarding agritourism has been conducted by scholars and has focused on: farm tourism and development patterns (Evans and Ilbery, 1992b; Walford,
2001); the marketing of agritourism (Clarke, 1995); the influence of public sectors on agritourism (Fleischer and Felenstein, 2000); issues associated with farm families including gender discrepancies and motivations for diversification (Henderson and Hoggart, 2003; Vik and McElwee, 2011; Hansson et al., 2013); and consumer demand for farm tourism (Denman and Denman, 1993), among others. It is important to note that scholars have also documented the negative outcomes of agritourism; Jongeneel et al. (2008), for example, examined the impacts of multifunctionality on farm independence, noting the resulting loss of identity that farmers face in order to mirror consumer expectations. Furthermore, Vanslembrouck and Van Huylenbroeck (2005) found that when participating in rural tourism, the most common reason for visiting a locale was the "silence and quietness of the agricultural landscape and life in the countryside" (100). Such a finding is interesting given that farm activities often generate significant noise and, as such, are rarely defined as quiet.

Regardless of the negative attributes associated with agritourism, it has been proven a successful endeavour for many family farmers in North America, Europe and Australia (Sharpley and Vass, 2006; Khanal and Mishra, 2014). In fact, agritourism is promoted throughout Europe, is noted prominently within the Common Agricultural Policy and is viewed as an opportunity to improve social and economic aspects of farming, while maintaining traditional farm practices (Cavaco, 1995; Hoggart et al., 1995; Williams and Shaw, 1998; Bjørkhaug and Richards, 2008). While agritourism can be considered a reflection of urban influences in shaping the rural countryside, in many instances, agritourism initiatives are based on farmers promoting the rural idyll (Che et
As many farm families are forced to re-evaluate their farming ventures, agritourism allows the farmers to maintain their current lifestyle while moving away from a dependence on external markets (Ilbery et al., 1998; Bagi and Reeder, 2012; Khanal and Mishra, 2014). It is important to note that the benefits of agritourism go beyond the individual farmer, however, as it ensures the landscape is preserved, traditional practices are not lost, and farmers are able to maintain farming as a lifestyle choice (Lobley and Potter, 2004; Che et al., 2005).

2.5.3.3 Multifunctional Identities

While agritourism does provide many benefits, challenges exist regarding consumer demand and the values, roles and uses consumers attach to these landscapes. Societal pressures often influence multifunctional decisions, such as land conservation and a lower dependence on chemical inputs, among other external influences (Lockie and Halpin, 2005; Smit et al., 2009; Lamine, 2011; Brummel and Nelson, 2014). According to Knickel and Renting (2000), multifunctional agriculture arose out of changing consumer demands and the failure of the productivist-farming model to meet these needs. For example, researchers have found that farmers have been encouraged by consumers to protect the countryside, reduce environmental hazards, provide ecological habitats and recreation, and maintain an idylized version of rurality (Sharpley and Vass, 2006; Jongeneel et al., 2008). This consumer demand forces farmers into a variety of roles, including tour guide and host as they provide for their customers (Heggem, 2008). Brandth and Haugen (2011) have documented the struggle of farmers to redefine their identity, noting that part of this struggle is due to the
inconsistency and volatility of role expectations. As a consequence, farmers may not feel comfortable in these new roles; for example, Burton (2004) has found that farmers often resist change that requires them to alter their long-established producer identity. Interestingly, farmers that embrace this new identity have farmed for a shorter period of time and are often younger and more educated (Jongeneel et al., 2008).

Renting et al. (2009) argue that the role of the consumer in constructing societal demands for multifunctional agriculture need to be better understood, as their perceptions of farming have drastically restructured parts of the industry. As a result of these expectations, farmers have been forced into a variety of roles, which some embrace while others reject. While the influences of external forces have caused some tension within the farm community, the ability of some farmers to capitalize on diversification activities, have resulted in financially feasible farms. While these economic benefits assist with farm viability, they provide an alternative understanding of agriculture, farming and rurality. As such, an analysis of multifunctional agriculture must recognize the heterogeneity of individual farms and rural communities.

2.5.3.4 Contextualizing Multifunctionality

It is important to understand that the term multifunctionality has largely been taken from a European context and applied to farmers in other developed and developing nations. This recognition is significant, as European multifunctionality arose out of political motivations to protect the agricultural system in Europe from the impacts of globalization and liberalized trade policies that threatened the viability of many small-scale family farms (Potter and Burney, 2002; Deybe, 2007; Renting et al., 2009;
Brummel and Nelson, 2014). In fact, within Europe, multifunctionality has been viewed as a manipulative policy tool used to defend agricultural subsidizations against global trade policies (Dibden and Cocklin, 2009). While studies have found that multifunctionality mattered to farmers in the United States (Hollander, 2004; Harden et al., 2013; Brummel and Nelson, 2014), the contextual nature of multifunctionality is important and will assist in understanding the motivations of farmers in non-European countries towards multifunctionality.

Beyond the historical roots of multifunctional agriculture, it is important to recognize that the success of multifunctional agriculture is quite variable (Wilson, 2008a; 2009; 2010). Wilson (2008a) has explored the various levels of multifunctional success, noting the differences in quality that exist along a spectrum of weak to strong and the variability that exists between rural agricultural communities. While quality is quite subjective, Wilson’s (2010) community-based model is built upon an ideal version of multifunctionality that encompasses the entire rural system. In general, strong multifunctionality is often viewed positively and attributed to the resilience of rural places, while weak multifunctionality is viewed negatively and is associated with vulnerable rural places (Pretty, 2002; Wilson, 2008a). To understand the spectrum of weak to strong multifunctionality, Wilson (2010) suggests that “resilient rural communities are characterised by well-developed economic, social and environmental capital” (366). The use of capital in understanding a rural community’s well-being is based on Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of capital, where a focus on economic capital weakened other capitals, such as social and cultural. To fully understand the value of
each capital and their interrelationships, examples of each form of capital, utilized for multifunctional agriculture, are provided in Table 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Capital</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| Economic        | Diversified income  
|                 | Diversified crops  
|                 | Low dependence on subsidization |
| Social          | Interaction between rural people and various stakeholders  
|                 | Gender and minority inclusive  
|                 | Clear land ownership |
| Environmental   | Biodiversity  
|                 | Sustainable soil management  
|                 | Sustainable management of environmental elements (e.g. water, naturalized areas, etc.) |

While such capital is difficult to measure (for example, the level or quality of interactions between rural people and various stakeholders), they are imperative to successful multifunctional farms. Further, each capital is dependent, to an extent, on the other capitals and can be impacted by internal or external sources. For example, sustainable soil management may be dependent upon diversified crops to prevent the leaching of the soil. Conversely, land ownership issues can impact the economic viability of a farm; tenant farmland may impact long-term viability due to their limited control of land use decisions (Wilson 2008a). While significant research has been conducted on the economic viability of family farms (Pomeroy, 2015), the importance of social capital (Kelsey and Veserstein, 2000; Sharp and Smith, 2003) and the significance of natural features (Jay, 2007; Huang et al., 2015), all three sources of capital must be examined holistically, and their interrelationships understood.
When assessing Wilson’s (2008a) spectrum of weak to strong multifunctionality (depicted in Figure 2.4), the above characteristics of economic, social and environmental capital must be considered. Strongly multifunctional farms have well-developed economic, social and environmental capital and include the characteristics listed in Table 2.2. Moderately multifunctional farms would have two of the three capitals well developed, while weakly multifunctional farms would only have one (Wilson, 2008a). Further, rural systems, and agricultural policies significantly impact the quality of multifunctional agriculture and how these capitals are developed (Wilson, 2010). The importance of these capitals and their interrelationships is depicted in Figure 2.5, which proposes that when economic capital is strongly defined, productivist agriculture becomes “super-productivism” and at the opposite end of the spectrum, strongly developed environmental capital becomes “non-productivist” agriculture (as termed by Wilson 2007; 2010).

![Figure 2.4: The weak to strong multifunctionality spectrum (building upon the information provided by Wilson, 2008a).](image)

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Importantly, strongly multifunctional systems are localized and not embedded within the global agricultural structure (Hollander, 2004; McCarthy, 2005; Wilson, 2007).

As was noted earlier, family farms tend to be well integrated within a rural community and such localization is necessary within strongly multifunctional farms as it helps contribute to rural community resilience (Wilson, 2010). The benefits then, of multifunctional agriculture, then, are not limited to the farm level as multifunctional family farms maintain community linkages and can contribute to rural resilience (Wilson, 2013). McManus et al. (2012) argue that community support is embedded within the multifunctional farming structure and at the farm level, Judd (2005) notes that successful multifunctional farmers have provided support for other struggling farm families, thus highlighting the value of social capital within the farm community. The social basis of multifunctional agriculture has also been found to benefit farmers economically, as socially active farmers were found to be better able to adapt to economic fluctuations and changes in consumer preference (Jongeneel et al., 2008).

Existing research also demonstrates that this support and social interaction is found at the rural community level. Indeed, the multifunctionality of agriculture has been

Figure 2.5: Interrelationships of economic, social and environmental capital and how they contribute to strong, moderate and weak multifunctionality (Wilson, 2010).
considered a renaissance for local community-based farming, as it reattaches or re-grounds agriculture within the rural landscape (Van der Ploeg and Roep, 2003). Further, Belletti et al. (2003) note that multifunctional farms have many benefits beyond the farm and that analysis of multifunctional agriculture must include the rural community where the agriculture takes place. Multifunctional agriculture has also been found to increase social capital as it re-establishes the local connection between farming and community (Clark, 2005) and scholars have documented the importance of social capital within rural communities and the linkages between economic sectors and community resilience (Sharp and Smith, 2003; Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, Wilson (2010) argues that in order for a rural agricultural community to be resilient, they must embrace multifunctionality economically, socially and environmentally.

It is important to recognize that the multifunctionality Wilson (2007, 2010, 2012) discusses is tied to the resilience of a rural community and reflects the impacts of rural farmers within their community. Indeed, such farmers are intimately bound to their geographic area and, as such, rural communities’ benefit. While Wilson (2010) does note the linkages between multifunctional farms and rural community resilience, in particular the resourcefulness of communities in overcoming internal and external challenges through multifunctional approaches, the farm unit is recognized as the important decision-making level. “Such resilience can be scaled down to the household and individual level, and it is the totality of economic, social and environmental actions/responses of individuals and households within a rural community that shape a community’s overall resilience” (Wilson, 2010, p. 368).
While it is true that multifunctional family farms can contribute to rural resilience, successful endeavours and strong multifunctionality are contextual. A number of farm-level decisions can impact multifunctionality internally, such as farm succession and farmers' health, as well as externally, through market demand and policy development (Clark, 2003; Wilson, 2008a). Further, as productivist and non-productivist activities can occur concurrently, on the same farm, patterns of intensification, extensification, consolidation and expansion can impact the scale of multifunctional activities (Primdahl, 1999). Marsden (2003) recognized that the viability of multifunctional agriculture is further dependent on farmers' non-agricultural skills, such as managerial and entrepreneurial, as these will determine how farmers respond to challenges and the ultimate success of their farm. It is important to also recognize that planning policies and other regulations can significantly impact agricultural multifunctionality, as policies vary across all scales, but the impacts are experienced at the local level (Wilson, 2010). Given the amenity value ascribed to the commodification of the countryside (Woods, 2011), rural agricultural communities possessing high amenity value are more likely to succeed given the competitive advantage (Clark, 2003). While geography does provide amenity value, it is often the constraints associated with geography that limits arable land and require multifunctional activities for viability (Wilson, 2010).

Finally, when considering global trends for multifunctionality, context is also significant. In particular, Wilson (2007) found that the transition to multifunctionality cannot be easily transposed from the global north to the global south. One limitation of the transition to multifunctionality is that many areas are entrenched in the global food
system and, as a result, are dependent on the exporting of agricultural goods (Goodman, 2004). While Wilson (2008b) notes that multifunctional agriculture does occur in developing countries, the transition to multifunctionality differs due to political, technological and environmental systems. It is important to recognize that export-driven agriculture is not limited only to developing countries, as developed nations, such as Australia and New Zealand, for example, also experience limited multifunctionality due to the productivist nature of their export-driven agricultural economy (Dibden et al., 2009; Lawrence et al., 2013). When considering the three capitals of multifunctionality, economic capital is often strengthened through globalization, while social and environmental capital are weakened (Wilson, 2013).

While multifunctionality is context specific, it is important to recognize that multifunctional family farms are impacted by a variety of processes, policies and practices that operate at multiple scales (Wilson, 2009). As depicted in Figure 2.6, scale should be considered from the farm level, at the bottom, to the global level, at the top. It is important to understand the interrelationships between each level and, while not depicted in Figure 2.6, horizontal spatial relations that exist between actors (Leitner et al., 2008). At the individual level, scale is an important consideration for decision-making as it reflects the complexity and variability of processes (Jonas, 2006). Further, according to Brenner (2001), “scales evolve relationally within tangled hierarchies and
dispersed interscalar networks” (p. 605). As such, multifunctional family farms must be considered through a variety of interrelated scales, both vertically and horizontally.

![Nested hierarchies of scale from the farm level to the global level and impacts of scale on multifunctionality](adapted from Wilson, 2009)

2.5.3.5 Multifunctional Agricultural Communities: Old Order Mennonites

The multifunctional framework of agriculture can be directly linked to Old Order Mennonites. Before this linkage can be presented, an understanding of Old Order Mennonites and the cultural characteristics of their community is necessary. Old Order Mennonites are a religious community that fall under the broad term Anabaptist, which is founded on a belief that baptism should occur in adulthood, when an individual has the capacity to accept God into their life (Peters, 2003). The term Mennonite comes
from the founder of the religion, a man named Menno Simons, a former Roman Catholic priest who broke from Catholicism in 1526. During this time period, the Mennonite religion was not viewed favourably due to its belief that church and state should be separate entities, swearing of oaths was not acceptable and as passivists, military service was denounced (Lee, 2000). As such, the reigning political institutions felt threatened by the Anabaptists and followers faced persecution and, in some instances, death (Peters, 2003). The Anabaptist belief did not decline during times of persecution and large communities were formed in Switzerland and southern Germany (Lee, 2000). Under persecution, the groups migrated to Holland, parts of Russia (now Poland and the Ukraine) and eventually, North America. Much of the migration to North America brought the Mennonites to Pennsylvania during the 18th and 19th centuries. During the late 1800s the Mennonite groups underwent significant transformation, with a number of divisions occurring around notions of secularism. The Old Order Mennonites arose out of these divisions and became distinct based on their conservative traditions and religious beliefs (Peters, 2003). Below, Table 2.3 differentiates between the various Anabaptist groups and Figure 2.7 places each group on a spectrum of traditionalism.
Table 2.3: Characteristics of various Anabaptist groups (Horst, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Orthodox Old Order Mennonite</th>
<th>Amish</th>
<th>Old Order Mennonite</th>
<th>Independent Old Order (David Martin)</th>
<th>Markham Mennonite</th>
<th>Old Colony Mennonite</th>
<th>United and General Mennonites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Pennsylvania Deutsch</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Deutsch</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Deutsch</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Deutsch</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Low German</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>&gt;12,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>&gt;12,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children/family</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td>Privately funded</td>
<td>Privately funded</td>
<td>Privately funded</td>
<td>Publicly funded</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Most publicly funded</td>
<td>Publicly funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horse and Buggy</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tractors</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Horses for cropping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electricity</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Plumbing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephones</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beards</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Funding</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Dark coloured dress for women, dark coloured clothes for men</td>
<td>Dark coloured dress for women, dark coloured clothes for men</td>
<td>Dark coloured small print dresses for women, dark coloured pants for men</td>
<td>Small print dresses for women, dark coloured pants for men</td>
<td>Women wear dresses, men wear dark clothing</td>
<td>Women wear dresses, men wear jeans and dark pants</td>
<td>No preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocation</td>
<td>90% farming</td>
<td>95% farming</td>
<td>90% farming</td>
<td>50-70% farming</td>
<td>40% farming</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Participation</td>
<td>Do not vote</td>
<td>Do not vote</td>
<td>Do not vote</td>
<td>Do not vote</td>
<td>Do not vote</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Some information was also based on the author's personal knowledge
2 The language listed is the language most commonly spoken. High German is typically spoken in church for Old Order Mennonites and Amish families and English is learnt in school.
3 Population refers to the total number within Canada. There are approximately 60,000 Mennonites in Ontario, of which, 20% are considered Old Order Mennonites.
4 The Orthodox Old Order Mennonites are counted as part of the Old Order Mennonite population.
5 This is an average and many families may have more children
Old Order Mennonites are generally considered to be the most conservative of all Mennonite groups, having entrenched those beliefs during the 1889 division. Old Order Mennonites speak Pennsylvania Deutsch (commonly mistaken as Pennsylvania Dutch), a German dialect at home and in church but learn English at school and conduct business in English as well. The community wears plain clothes, use a horse and buggy for transportation and maintain agriculture as a primary business within each community (Peters, 2003). Within their theology and dictating how they should live their life, is Gelassenheit, which entrenches an understanding of humility, tolerance, patience, servanthood and submission, ultimately representing community. Each community will have their own school, which follows the minimum curriculum requirements identified by the Ministry of Education and each community will have at least one church, referred to
as a 'meeting place'. The leader in each community is the bishop, but deacons and ministers are also part of the system and all are elected (Peters, 2003).

As part of being an Old Order Mennonite, they avoid individualism and boastful or prideful behaviour, and attach great value to hard, physical labour, which is viewed as a gift from God (Peters, 2003). This hard work is most visible within their agricultural endeavours as most households have a farm and a variety of other work is carried out within the community, as needed. Diversification of activities conducted at the household level has become increasingly more common over the past 30 years, given population growth and land access limitations; however, diversified crops and livestock have always been part of the Old Order Mennonite farming system. Wealth accumulation is despised, advertising is extremely limited and government aid is forbidden (Peters, 2003). In terms of agriculture, their operations are diverse, and children form the workforce, with some children assisting neighbours if needed. It is expected that children will own a farm and such ownership does not occur without community support. Non-farm businesses are often out of necessity and typically occur during non-agricultural seasons but businesses such as carpentry, welding and other occupations may occur year-round.

It is apparent that Old Order Mennonites operate in a multifunctional manner with diverse activities and secondary businesses. They strive to keep farms within a smaller-scale, generally between 100 to 175 acres, which can be managed by the farm household and financially supported through diversification activities (Peters, 2003). Given the high birth rates per household, the workable area of a farm increases in
correlation to family size and farm parcels are often divided, where policy allows, for the children when they become adults and marry. While they are not boastful and avoid marketing, agritourism endeavours are not favoured by this community given the spectacle associated with such practices. It is interesting to note that examples of agritourism in southern Ontario can be found in St. Jacobs, with a large farmers’ market, as well as with some households in the surrounding community that provide farm tours. Beyond this, they maintain a relatively private lifestyle. The Mennonite religion encourages believers to resist worldliness and through their plain lifestyle, dependence on agriculture and traditional gender dynamics, these religious convictions are maintained. This dissertation, however, does not provide a critical lens on their religious convictions, and instead focuses on their contributions to community, focus on agriculture and ultimately, resilience.

2.6 Conclusion: Multifunctional Resilience

As many smaller-scale family farms cannot compete with large agricultural endeavours and economies of scale force these farmers out of the field, an alternative approach to farming is needed. Multifunctionality provides family farms with an opportunity to diversify income through productive and consumptive land uses, contributing to resilience, while encouraging farm viability. As stated by Potter and Burney (2002), agriculture is multifunctional when it is “producing not only food but also sustaining rural landscapes, protecting biodiversity, generating employment and contributing to the viability of rural areas” (p. 35). Multifunctional family farms require a new understanding of the meaning and purpose of rural space as the traditional
productivist farm system is abandoned and rural places can no longer be exploited for industrial production (Woods, 2011).

Multifunctional agriculture is also argued to be a survival strategy for farm families and demonstrates their resilience and determination to maintain some form of agricultural production (Meert et al., 2005; McManus et al., 2012). The opportunity to continue farming as a lifestyle is an important component of family farms and this lifestyle is embedded within a local system (Wilson, 2007; Hansson et al., 2013). When considering the applicability of resilience, it important to recognize that farms are impacted by a variety of scales, relationships and stresses. A thorough assessment of resilience theory within multifunctional agriculture systems is necessary to contribute not only to our knowledge on resilience within the social sciences but also the viability of family farms and rural agricultural communities. The balance of this dissertation explores this concept in further detail.
3 Chapter 3: Methodology

The agricultural industry in northern Ontario has undergone significant restructuring as the farm industry is currently undergoing a period of regeneration. There has been renewed interest at the provincial and municipal level to invest in northern agriculture and promote the expansion of this industry. Northern Ontario has also been viewed favourably by Old Order Mennonites from southern Ontario, as land availability has attracted many from this community. While Old Order Mennonites have migrated to northern Ontario for agricultural opportunities, it is important to understand the challenges associated with northern agriculture and how these communities have demonstrated resilience in a new territory. Northern Ontario may offer new agricultural opportunities, but the landscape and climate are significantly different than southern Ontario. Considering the rapid migration of Old Order Mennonites seeking the agrarian lifestyle in northern Ontario, understanding the challenges they have faced can offer insights for perspective farmers, the provincial government and other stakeholders.

In order to research the resilience of Old Order Mennonite communities in northern Ontario, a variety of methods were utilized. This chapter will provide a theoretical framework for the research, ethical considerations, the methods utilized and associated limitations. It will conclude with a discussion on my positionality.

3.1 Research Paradigm: Systems Theory

It is important that this research be situated within a theoretical paradigm, as data collection, analysis and findings are undoubtedly impacted by theoretical assumptions. Systems theory is an appropriate paradigm for this research, given its holistic
foundations, recognition of complexity and utilization of qualitative data (Patton, 2002). According to Gharajedaghi and Ackoff (1984) “[e]ffective management of a system requires managing the interactions of its parts, not the actions of its parts taken separately” (p. 24). Such thinking aligns well with resilience theory, in that assessing resilience requires the analysis of an entire system or structure, with importance placed upon the interactions and relationships of various components. According to Repko (2012), systems thinking is appropriate for interdisciplinary research as it is nonlinear, holistic and critical. Through this lens, it is recognized that a variety of relationships at various scales impact a system and that linear thinking is not effective. As with resilience theory, a change in one part of the system at one scale may result in changes in another part of the system at the same or different scale (Mathews and Jones, 2008; Straussfogel and von Schilling, 2009). This theory requires a holistic, comprehensive analysis of the entire system in order to understand the issues, structures and contributors (Repko, 2012).

Systems theory has been applied to agricultural research and such research has stressed the importance of interdisciplinarity, collaboration, context and that agricultural systems are dynamic (Patton, 2002). Systems theory provides an appropriate paradigm for this study, as it views the social and physical worlds as connected through various relationships at a variety of hierarchical scales (Straussfogel and von Schilling, 2009). Such scales are important within this study, as Old Order Mennonites are impacted at an individual farm level, community level and broadly at the provincial level. Further, in assessing the resilience of Old Order Mennonite farmers, the relationships impacting
their endeavours must be considered, as these relationships impact their agricultural system, cultural system and community system. As such, an assessment of the resilience of Old Order Mennonites cannot be conducted without considering the entire system within which they function.

3.2 Research Framework

The framework for this research has been resilience theory, in particular, the notion that resilience must be studied as a dynamic system, at a variety of scales. Through the broad framework of resilience, this research focused on understanding the resilience of rural agricultural communities in northern Ontario at a variety of scales. Central to resilience theory is the importance of examining the subject holistically and as such, this study examined agricultural resilience among Old Order Mennonites in northern Ontario at a community level, including the Old Order Mennonite community, the agricultural community and the broader rural community. While the community level was the primary focus and it is recognized that multiple communities are identified, the relationships and impacts of other agents and scales were also examined.

The agricultural industry in northern Ontario has undergone significant restructuring and with renewed interests from the provincial government, is currently undergoing a period of regeneration. While new farmers are moving to the north, it is important to understand the challenges these farmers have faced and the strategies they have employed to adapt to changes both at the farm level and beyond. The resilience of northern farmers is evident in their continued farm operation and the expansion and diversification of the industry. Given the potential associated with
northern agriculture, it is important to understand how farmers overcome challenges and the strategies they utilized to remain viable farm enterprises. Of particular interest is the migration of Old Order Mennonite farmers from southern Ontario and their experiences of farming in a vastly different geographic region. In general, agriculture in Ontario is a complicated industry impacted by local, provincial and global policies. As a result, and as noted in the literature review, agricultural systems have changed drastically, with singular productive-based operations typically finding success at a large scale. Family farms tend to operate on a smaller scale and are less viable within a productivist model. Old Order Mennonites in particular strive to maintain a small-scale operation that fits within their broader community.

In northern Ontario, the challenges of agriculture are heightened, due to a shorter growing season, poorer quality soils and lower population densities, when compared to southern Ontario. Considering this, understanding the motivations, challenges and opportunities associated with agriculture in northern Ontario is important. Old Order Mennonites have seemingly been successful in their move to more northern locales, yet the reasons for their success are largely unknown. Research regarding Old Order Mennonite communities is limited and typically has focused on their heritage (Bowen, 2001), religion (Lee, 2005), health care (Glick et al., 1998; Kulig et al., 2009) and education (Johnson-Weiner, 2007). This study addresses a significant gap in the literature and the lessons learned from this study may have applicability to the broader agricultural sector in northern Ontario.
3.3 Ethical Considerations

This research primarily focused on Old Order Mennonite farmers, a culturally unique population within the farm community. These farmers represent a minority within the agricultural sector and traditionally, are private in terms of community organization, function and decision-making. After significant consideration for conducting this research in an ethically sensitive manner, this study was approved by the University of Guelph’s Office of Research: Research Ethics Board. As part of this process, the approved application specified how data would be collected, stored and analyzed. Given that this research was culturally sensitive, it was determined that the methods employed would not involve audio recording participants; instead, all data were transcribed live and, when possible, verbatim. These transcriptions were typed as participants spoke, which made live transcription possible. Participants were given the opportunity to review the data collected and revise or correct any information that was deemed inaccurate or inappropriate. While the names of participants were not used in data analysis or presentation, given the small size of Old Order Mennonite communities, anonymity could not be guaranteed but confidentiality of individual responses has been maintained.

3.4 Methods

This research utilized a mixed-methodological approach that included a jurisdictional scan, case studies and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A mixed-methodological approach provided data from a variety of sources and offered insights regarding various aspects of the agricultural sector, including agri-business, policy and
community development. Mixed-methodological approach have been utilized by other researchers studying farming communities (for example: Perez et al., 2003; Smithers et al., 2004; Galt et al., 2011; Turner and Hope, 2015). Each method is briefly described below and includes justification for its use in this research project.

3.4.1 Jurisdictional Scan

Before formal data collection began, a jurisdictional scan was undertaken in order to understand the agricultural system in northern Ontario and agricultural opportunities that may exist. This scan began with an overview of the history of agriculture in northern Ontario, including the economic, political and social structures currently in place. Of importance was an analysis of the local food sector, including the availability and locations of agricultural services and diversity of agricultural sectors. As demonstrated in Figure 3.1, agricultural services within northern Ontario are clustered along the southern, eastern and western portions of northern Ontario. The clustering of these services helped to identify areas of potentially robust agricultural sectors that may attract new farmers.

The jurisdictional scan included journal articles, books, and documents related to local and regional policies, agricultural action plans and relevant provincial legislation. Miller (1997) notes that texts are socially constructed, contested and reconstructed in order to understand our social reality. It is important to understand that text is not passive or neutral and that it actively shapes both social and spatial realities (Wilson, 2009a). Patton (2002) notes the value of evaluating documents and recognizing that they may stimulate future areas for inquiry that can be achieved through other methods.
Building on Patton (2002), the document analysis, as part of the jurisdictional scan, informed future data collection, particularly around potential case study sites.

This jurisdictional scan also included reports written by farm organizations, newspaper articles, and other relevant material or media. Of importance was the review of local northern newspapers which highlighted the migration of Old Order Mennonites to various communities. These anecdotal accounts provided valuable information regarding the timeframe of migration, agricultural endeavours and impacts on the local food system. As Old Order Mennonites are a culturally unique group of farmers, easily

Figure 3.1: Location of agricultural services in northern Ontario (Caldwell, Epp and Howes, 2018)
visible due to their clothing choices and use of horse and buggy for transportation, their migration to the north stood out. Many newspaper articles highlighted this move and provided foundational information to be discussed with potential participants.

3.4.2 Case Study

Case studies provide a detailed analysis of a particular person, issue or community within a bounded system (Flyvbjerg, 2011). While the primary case studies focus on Old Order Mennonite agricultural communities in northern Ontario, it is recognized that northern Ontario can be considered a case study, given the unique geography, demography and political structure. Many places within the north can be considered remote, with significantly lower population densities and political structures that differ from southern Ontario (e.g. unincorporated townships). According to Yin (2013), case study research is appropriate when present social circumstances or phenomenon are being studied. The social circumstance in northern Ontario are vastly different from southern Ontario, and many communities in the north are removed from the mainstream due to geographic distance. From this analysis of northern Ontario, three case study sites within the north were selected and are described below.

3.4.2.1 Multiple Case Study Sites

Within the broad case study of northern Ontario, three individual case study sites were identified and formed the basis of this study: Desbarats area, Algoma District; Massey, Sudbury District; and, Black River-Matheson, Cochrane District. The map provided in Figure 3.2 identifies each location within northern Ontario with a star. These
sites were selected as Old Order Mennonites had migrated to these communities and created new Old Order Mennonite settlements. There was no history of Old Order

Figure 3.2: Location of Desbarats, Black River-Matheson and Massey (Epp, 2018)
Mennonites within these towns prior to their initial migration between 2004-2013. While there are other Anabaptist communities in northern Ontario, no other Old Order Mennonite communities exist. It is noted that there are three Amish communities and one Markham Mennonite community in northern Ontario. While all four groups are broadly labelled as Anabaptist, Amish and Markham Mennonites are different compared to the Old Order Mennonites and as such, the case studies presented focus only on the three Old Order Mennonite communities in northern Ontario.

The case study method was beneficial, as it allowed for an investigation into the similarities and differences between locations and the identification of processes and practices that may occur across locales. As noted by Herbert (2010), case study research permits an in-depth analysis of the impacts of globalization at a more local scale and the role of local actors in conforming or resisting these influences. Repko (2009) further notes that case studies provide detailed insight into a particular issue and often utilize a mixed-methods approach to data collection. Given the influences of globalization on the agricultural industry and the current agricultural activities within Old Order Mennonite communities occurring in northern Ontario, case study research is an appropriate method for this study. A brief overview of each case study site is provided below, but greater detail on the nuances between communities is included within the findings chapter.

3.4.2.1.1 Desbarats Area, Algoma District

The community of Desbarats is a hamlet within Johnson Township, located along the north shore of Lake Huron. It is located approximately 60 kilometres east of Sault
Ste. Marie, the largest city within Algoma District. Johnson Township has a population of 751 people and a population density of 6.2 people per square kilometre (Statistics Canada, 2016). The first five Old Order Mennonite families moved to the Desbarats area in 2004 and, as of 2017, 38 families resided in this community. Between 2001 and 2016, the population of Johnson Township increased by 14% and it can be inferred that this population growth is related to the migration of Old Order Mennonites. Neighbouring communities, including Echo Bay and Bruce Mines have experienced fluctuations in their populations, with Echo Bay’s population increasing by nearly 11% and Bruce Mines’ population decreasing by 7% over the same time period. In terms of workforce, nearly 30% of the working population is in the agriculture, forestry, fishing or the hunting field. Following this, when combined, transportation, education and health services account for 27% of the working population. The community is a popular area for recreational activities, including boating, fishing and hunting in the summer and snowmobiling in the winter.

Currently, the Old Order Mennonite community represent approximately 25% of the local population. The Old Order Mennonite community in the Desbarats area is considered *Orthodox* Old Order Mennonites, as they follow the strictest rules regarding adoption of modern technology. This community does not permit indoor plumbing, telephones, electricity, tractors or other modern technological advancements. Farm work is completed by hand and with the assistance of horses. The farm activities in this community are dominated by fresh produce, with some small livestock operations throughout (e.g. laying hens, poultry, pigs and beef cows).
3.4.2.1.2 Black River-Matheson, Cochrane District

Black River-Matheson is a township located in the Cochrane District, approximately 70 kilometres to the west of Timmins, the largest city within the District. In 2016, the population of Black River-Matheson was 2,438 people, with a population density of 2.1 people per square kilometre. The community of Black River-Matheson has an active aggregate extraction industry, with 12 active mines and nine additional mines in advanced development. The workforce in Black River-Matheson is largely related to mining, with 30% employed in the trades, transport and equipment operators. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting only represent 7% of the labour force.

The first five Old Order Mennonite families moved to Black River-Matheson in 2013 and currently, there are 30 families. This community of Old Order Mennonites has grown rapidly; however, they account for less than 10% of the local population. Unlike the Old Order Mennonite group in Desbarats, this community utilizes some modern technologies, including indoor plumbing, electricity, telephones and tractors. They are committed to retaining the horse and buggy as their primary mode of transportation and restrict mechanical equipment to the farm and other business operations. Primary farming activities are related to livestock, including beef cows, poultry, laying hens, dairy and buffalo. In terms of horticulture, the majority of production is focused on growing the necessary feed and cash crops; fresh produce is generally limited in production to market gardens and personal consumption.
3.4.2.1.3 Massey, Sudbury District

Massey is a town amalgamated within the township of Sables-Spanish Rivers and is located on the north shore of Georgian Bay, approximately 100 kilometres west of the city of Sudbury. In 2016, the township’s population was 3,214 people, with a population density of 3.9 people per square kilometre. Chutes Provincial Park is located within Massey and the natural landscape of this community is promoted by the town for tourism purposes. The rural idyll and tranquility are used for promotional purposes, as is the community’s proximity to large urban centres (Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers, 2018). The labour force in Massey is quite diverse, with agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting accounting for 11%. Retail trade represents an additional 11% of the labour force population, while the mining and manufacturing combined total represents 19% of the workforce.

The first five Old Order Mennonite families moved to this community in 2006 and, presently, there are 25 families. Similar to the community in Black River-Matheson, this group identifies as Old Order Mennonites and utilizes some modern technologies, including indoor plumbing, electricity, telephones and tractors for the farm. Farm activities include fresh produce and a variety of livestock, including laying hens, poultry, beef cows and dairy.

3.4.3 In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews

As part of the case study data collection, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were utilized. Interviews permit participants the opportunity to provide descriptive and
personal responses to questions asked. Interviews are often emotionally based and can elicit thoughtful and honest responses from participants (Longhurst, 2009). Interviews permit the researcher the opportunity to record another person’s perspective and gather their stories (Patton, 2002) and, given the level of detail provided in interviews, are considered an ideal data collection method within case studies (Yin, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Repko, 2009). Interviews were conducted with a broad group of individuals, which included Old Order Mennonites, non-Mennonite farmers within case study sites, municipal staff, farm organizations and government agencies. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were utilized for all participants and interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. The interview guides, included in Appendices 1 and 2, were based on each participant group, with three different guides utilized: farmer guide, municipal or provincial representative guide, and farm organization guide. The semi-structured format allowed the interviews to evolve based on individual interaction, as the guide provided a starting point but follow up questions were asked based on participant responses.

The primary data for this study was gained from interviews with Old Order Mennonites and began with individuals from each town that were considered the spokesperson for that community. These individuals were identified through interviews with northern staff from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), contacts in southern Ontario and other northern contacts that were familiar with the Old Order Mennonite communities. Snowball sampling was utilized with the Old Order Mennonite community and refers to the practice of asking initial participants for
additional contacts. Snowball sampling is beneficial as initial participants often have insider knowledge on their community and people that share their characteristics. While snowball sampling has been criticized for the potential of participants to be too similar to the initial interviewees, it is viewed as an appropriate strategy for engaging participants within hard to reach communities (Lo, 2009). Snowball sampling was used with the initial interviews in each community and these participants were asked to provide contact information for other potential interviewees from their respective community. These gatekeepers were of significant value to this study as they provided access to participants that would not have otherwise been possible. Details regarding data collection by community is provided below. The interview guide used with the Old Order Mennonites and non-Mennonite farmers is provided in Appendix 1.

In addition to these interviews, interviews with non-Mennonite farmers and northern farm organizations also provided insight into northern agriculture and the practices of Old Order Mennonite farmers. Northern farm organizations included OMAFRA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance, Rural Agri-Innovation Network and the Northeast Community Network (NeCN). Interviews with municipal staff including planners, economic development staff and political representatives were also part of the data collected. Given the localized nature of their knowledge, these interviews provided depth and breadth to the data collected for each case study. Interview guides for these participants are included in Appendix 2. Table 3.1 provides a list of the number of interviews and type of participants by case study site.
Table 3.1: Interview participants by case study site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Desbarats</th>
<th>Black River-Matheson</th>
<th>Massey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Order Mennonite</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Mennonite Farmer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the interviews with Old Order Mennonites in Desbarats and Black River-Matheson occurred in their home, face to face. Only one interview with an Old Order Mennonite from Massey was conducted face to face; the remaining interviews were conducted over the telephone, at a time that was convenient for each individual. The interviews in Massey took place between June and July 2018, an incredibly busy time for a farmer. In order to be inobtrusive and not take the farmer out of the field during the summer season, telephone interviews were arranged at a time that was convenient for each farmer. Many interviews were rescheduled multiple times due to the participant’s workload and most occurred late in the evening. While in-person interviews were not
feasible given the summer season and unpredictability of participant schedules, the telephone interviews worked well. The majority of interviews with all other participants occurred face to face at their office, café or other location of their choosing. Two interviews with OMAFRA representatives were conducted via telephone. No interviews were audio recorded. All transcriptions were typed as the interview took place and much of the transcriptions are verbatim. Given the technological restrictions with the Old Order Mennonite community in Desbarats, interview notes were transcribed by hand, with limited verbatim quotes. All participants had the opportunity to review their responses and revise or clarify any transcribed comments. Rigour within each Old Order Mennonite community was demonstrated when a point of saturation was reached, and no new information was gained. The number of interviews, type of participant and timeframe of data collection for each locale is provided below.

3.4.3.1 Data Collection: Desbarats, Algoma District

Interviews within the Desbarats community were first initiated in April 2016 by a graduate student working on a broader project exploring the migration of farmers to northern Ontario. This student completed 11 interviews with Old Order Mennonites from the Desbarats community, using the interview guide in Appendix 1 and I was provided with transcripts from these interviews. Building on this initial data collection, I travelled to the Desbarats community in November 2016 with this graduate student and we held a group interview with eight of the initial 11 participants, to confirm the data provided in their earlier interviews. This group interview was three hours in length and provided me the opportunity to verify the information collected by the graduate student. This method
was considered a group interview and not a focus group, given my prominent role as an interviewer. Focus groups typically restrict the role of the interviewer to a moderator; discussions and interactions between participants are documented and the researcher has a limited role (Secor, 2009). For this group interview, I was not a passive moderator and actively asked questions throughout the session to both the group and individuals and controlled the direction of conversation (Frey and Fontana, 1991; Secor 2009). Unlike a focus group, this group interview dealt with a variety of topics and at times, questions were asked and answered on an individual basis (Patton, 2002). Given the group nature of this interview, some comments and quotations in the findings section cannot be attributed to an individual farmer. The eight interviews that were confirmed during the group interview were utilized for this project. I was unable to confirm the accuracy of three interview transcripts from April 2016 and as such, they were not included in this study. During fieldwork in July 2016 and July 2017, interviews with the former mayor, the OMAFRA representative and the representative from the Rural-Agri Innovation Network and non-Mennonite farmers were held. The timeline for these interviews is provided in Figure 3.3.
3.4.3.2 Data Collection: Black River-Matheson, Cochrane District

Interviews regarding the Black River-Matheson community were first initiated in July 2016, with participants from OMAFRA and the NeCN. In August 2017, an initial interview was conducted with a gatekeeper from the Old Order Mennonite Community. At the request of this participant, further data collection within the community was delayed until the winter season, given the seasonal nature of agriculture. In February 2018, six additional interviews with Old Order Mennonites from this community occurred. Additional interviews regarding the Black River-Matheson community with OMAFRA, the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance (NOFIA), Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), NeCN, a local political representative and non-Mennonite farmers were also completed. The timeline for these interviews is shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.3: Data collection timeline for Desbarats
Data Collection: Massey, Sudbury District

Interviews regarding the Massey community were initiated in July 2017 through a contact from OMAFRA. Through this participant, an initial interview with a gatekeeper from the Old Order Mennonite community occurred. Due to his lack of interest in the project, this participant did not provide any additional contacts. In June 2018, the initial contact from OMAFRA recommended contacting an older member of the community regarding the research. This individual agreed to participate in an interview in June 2018 and subsequently provided contacts for four additional individuals. All four agreed to participate in an interview and interviews with Old Order Mennonites from the Massey community were completed between June and July 2018. In addition to these interviews
and similar to the other two case studies, interviews with the local OMAFRA representatives, farm organization, town mayor and non-Mennonite farmers were also completed. A summary timeline of these interviews is provided in Figure 3.5.

![Figure 3.5: Data collection timeline for Massey](image)

### 3.5 Limitations of the Research

This research was limited by two aspects associated with data collection: time constraints and the number of participants. Data collection with Old Order Mennonites took a considerable amount of time due to cultural sensitivity. It was important to the researcher that trust was established with community members and was a foundational aspect of all interactions with Old Order Mennonites. Identifying the appropriate contact in each community was complicated and establishing trust with this individual from each
case study site was time consuming. Given the spiritual and cultural beliefs of this community, support of older community members or the community bishop was necessary. Preliminary discussions with these individuals were necessary in order to establish a relationship, develop trust and gain support of the broader community. Once trust was established, scheduling interviews with participants was further complicated by their work schedules and were often completed early in the morning or late in the evening, based on their individual preference. A consistent interview schedule was impossible and while the interviews in Black River-Matheson occurred within one week, with multiple interviews per day, the interviews in Massey took two months to complete and at times, were weeks apart. It was important that interviews were scheduled according to participant preferences; however, this resulted in a lengthy period of data collection. Further, for in-person interviews, the geographic distance was an additional complexity that extended the period of data collection.

The total number of interviews conducted with Old Order Mennonites may be considered low; however, as the number of households was relatively small, the total number of interviews represents between 20-30% of the Old Order Mennonite families in each community. Further, given the patriarchal structure of these communities, it was expected that all interview participants would be male, thus limiting the number of potential participants. While interaction with the wives of Old Order Mennonites did occur, in every interaction, they declined to formally participate and recommended speaking with their husband. For some interviews, the wife was present and often listened in on the conversation, but they rarely participated. This is in no way to diminish
the important role that women play in Mennonite society both in terms of their contribution on the farm and family structure, which enhances resilience of society and farm community. It is also important to note that additional interviews with Old Order Mennonite farmers were not sought once a saturation point had been reached and no new information was gained. Further, data quality and depth were monitored through data analysis and robustness was demonstrated given the overlap between participant responses and case study sites.

3.6 The Researcher’s Positionality

My positionality within this research was integral to the data collection process, most importantly when interacting with Old Order Mennonites. My heritage is Russian Mennonite and my last name is common within Mennonite communities. During the first stage of data collection within Desbarats, when I formally spoke with Old Order Mennonites through the group interview (November 2016), I did not openly identify as Mennonite. At the end of the group interview, the community’s bishop brought up my last name and inquired if I was Mennonite. In confirming the bishop’s question, a bond was created, and the bishop appeared relaxed and more open than during the earlier part of our discussion. I was asked many personal questions about my family’s history, their migration to Canada and differences between our Mennonite communities. It was fortuitous to be recognized as Mennonite by this bishop as it established a relationship of trust, camaraderie, and mutual respect.

Moving forward, I brought up my Mennonite heritage early on in the research process. Often, before a participant would commit to an interview, they wanted to know
why I was interested and what I would do with this research. I openly shared that my interest was broad but part of it came from my own Mennonite background and understanding of Mennonite beliefs, traditions and religion. I often sensed an audible shift in tone with this realization, as participant skepticism and hesitation reduced. During in-person interviews, participants physically relaxed, were more animated in their dialogue and open about their personal circumstances after noting our shared Mennonite heritage. I believe that the level of detail provided in interviews, the open and honest responses participants provided and the invitations to visit after my research is completed, demonstrate their trust in me and the value they attached to Mennonite heritage.

As part of the Old Order Mennonite culture, men are in charge of the businesses, while women are responsible for the household. As this research focused on their agricultural endeavours, it was expected that the male of household would be approached for participation in this study. Given the patriarchal structure of the Old Order Mennonite community, some trepidation regarding gender dynamics and the willingness of participants to work with a female researcher was felt at the start of the study. During the group interview in Desbarats in November 2016, many of the participants did not respond directly to me when questioned but to my male colleague. These participants had been previously interviewed by my colleague and their limited conversations directly with me may have been due to their lack of familiarity with me and comfort with my colleague. This was the only instance when I was concerned that my gender would limit participation in this study. I did not experience any other
hesitation or unwillingness to participate in this research as a result of my gender. Gender dynamics between a female researcher and Old Order Mennonites were discussed in a study by Gingrich and Lightman (2006), which noted that Gingrich’s husband accompanied her to all interviews, in keeping with Old Order Mennonite customs. In doing so, when asked a question by Gingrich, all participants directed their responses to Gingrich’s husband, which was similar to my experience in Desbarats. As interviews for the other two case studies were conducted independently, the remaining participants interacted directly with me. While some contacts declined participation, I do not believe that their decision was based on my gender, nor do I believe my gender impacted participation levels or the quality of data collected for this research.3

When I began this research, I did not intend to discuss my cultural background, family or other personal details; however, it became apparent during the early stages of data collection that the participants wanted to know my story as much as I wanted to know their story. This mutual sharing of personal details was necessary and allowed me to build trust and respect within each community. While I was still considered an outsider as I was not an Old Order Mennonite, my Mennonite heritage gave me greater access to the community and removed limitations that many outsiders experience with

3 Before conducting interviews with the Old Order Mennonite community, I met with the director of The Mennonite Story, a cultural and heritage centre focused on Mennonites. The director works closely with Old Order Mennonites and is familiar with their culture, community dynamics and interactions with non-Mennonites. The issue of gender was discussed at length and potential limitations associated with a female researcher working within a patriarchal community. These concerns were dismissed, and the director noted that gender dynamics were an antiquated fear that lacked legitimacy. He believed that the communities would be welcoming towards a female researcher and that my gender would not impact their level of participation. My experiences within each of the communities confirmed the director’s opinion.
culturally sensitive research (Lee, 2000; Skelton, 2009).

3.7 Summary

This chapter detailed the theoretical paradigm, research methodology and researcher’s positionality. The use of mixed-methods for this study was appropriate in meeting the research objectives and addressing the research questions. The selection criteria for case study sites was also discussed, noting that there are only three Old Order Mennonite communities in northern Ontario, thus significantly limiting the number of study sites. Each of these communities agreed to participate in the study and the interviews with Old Order Mennonites, non-Mennonite farmers, farm organization and municipal representatives demonstrates rigour, and both knowledge depth and breadth. Finally, the researcher’s positionality was beneficial for this research, as the shared Mennonite heritage provided a foundation of trust not available to non-Mennonite researchers.
4 Findings

This study sought to understand the resilience of Old Order Mennonite farming communities in northern Ontario. In particular, it applied a resilience framework to the data collected from each study site in order to understand their vulnerabilities, adaptive capacity and relationships across a variety of scales. In applying the resilience framework, it was anticipated that multifunctionality and diversification would be apparent within their agricultural operations and that these characteristics impacted their resilience.

The basic framework for resilience theory is presented in Figure 4.1 (below). This framework highlights that hazards (and others) impact vulnerability and depending on the level of vulnerability, adaptive capacity is affected. From this, three options are possible, decline, resilience and transformation. In the section that follows, the findings from each study are provided, using themes common throughout each case study: motivations to move, farming structure, community interactions, future opportunities and lingering challenges. The content within each theme may vary by case study but these themes do not. From this, an assessment of the vulnerabilities, adaptive capacity and ultimately, resilience, is presented for each case study. These findings will demonstrate the importance of scale and relationships within resilience, as the resilience of each community was impacted by a variety of factors at a variety of scales. Given the
differences in farm structures, understanding resilience among the Old Order Mennonite communities is complex.

![Resilience framework (Epp, 2018)]

**4.1 Desbarats, Johnson Township**

“We, as Christians, deliberately refuse to take advantage of government funding, since we are not a part of the kingdom of this world but rather, a part of the Kingdom of Christ. The kingdom of this world does well to take care of its own, but since we are a part of the Kingdom of Christ, we depend on it and its believers for support, be it financially or spiritually.”

Desbarats, a hamlet within Johnson Township, is the most eastern case study site. As previously highlighted, the population of Johnson Township is 751 people, with a population density of 6.2 people per square kilometre (Statistics Canada, 2016). The population has increased by 14% between 2001 and 2016 and much of that growth can be attributed to the migration of the Old Order Mennonites. Currently, there are 38 families in the community, representing approximately 25% of the local population.

Figures 16 and 17 are hand drawn maps that portray the location of Old Order Mennonite households within Johnson Township and the hamlet of Desbarats, respectively. While the map is mainly intended for use by the broad Old Order
Mennonite community, it is publicly available for purchase from a Mennonite store in Elmira, Ontario. The map helps provide a visual representation of the size of farm operations and the geographic distance between Old Order Mennonite households. This map is an important document for Old Order Mennonites as their avoidance of technology, such as Geographic Positioning Systems, makes the accuracy of such hand drawn maps important. When family or friends from southern Ontario travel to the north to visit, the map in Figures 4.2 and 4.3 provides the necessary locational information. Figure 4.2 provides an overview of Johnson Township, while Figure 4.3 is an enlarged inset map of the hamlet of Desbarats.

4.1.1 Characteristics of Participants

Data from eight members of the Desbarats Old Order Mennonite community are included in this study. In addition to these interviews, five interviews with non-Mennonite farmers, the former mayor of Johnson Township and representatives from OMAFRA and the Rural Agri-Innovation Network were also part of this analysis. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the Old Order Mennonite participants, including farm size, type of farm and how long they have lived in Johnson Township.
Figure 4.2: Map of Orthodox Old Order Mennonites outside of the Desbarats hamlet, in Johnson Township
Figure 4.3: Map of Orthodox Old Order Mennonite community in the Desbarats hamlet, Johnson Township
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer</th>
<th>Date of Move</th>
<th>Size of Farm</th>
<th>Farm Activities</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer A</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>100 acres, 85 acres cleared</td>
<td>20 beef cows, 10 horses, 50 background cattle, 25 acres mixed grains, 10 acres corn, 50 acres hay and pasture</td>
<td>Supplier of fencing supplies (twine, gates, feeders and related items), manufacture and repair buggy wheels and general welding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer B</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>192 acres, 80 acres cleared</td>
<td>30 cows, 40 sheep, hay, grain and produce</td>
<td>Sells produce at farmers’ market and produce auction, timber sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer C</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>153 acres, 80 acres cleared</td>
<td>100 laying hens, 4 sows, 2 horses, 100 broiler birds, 2 cows, 1 acre of vegetables, as well as hay and pasture</td>
<td>Runs produce store, maintains produce storage and distribution for community, seasonal storage for cottagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer D</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>220 acres, 100 cleared</td>
<td>20 cows, 100 sheep, hay, sileage corn and grains</td>
<td>Sawmill for building and materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer E</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>60 acres, mostly unworkable</td>
<td>5 cattle, 40 goats</td>
<td>Hardwood lumber drying, coordinate trucking for equipment, feed and seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer F</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>121 acres, 75 acres cleared</td>
<td>40 head of cattle, 6 acres vegetables, 25 acres hay, 15 acres pasture, 30 acres mixed grains</td>
<td>Sells at the produce auction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Farmer G
- **Year:** 2004
- **Acreage:** 124 acres, 105 acres workable
- **Animals:** 200 hens, 30 sheep, 8 horses, 1 cow
- **Activities:** Roadsides stand, uses loom to make clothing from alpaca fiber for a local alpaca farmer

### Farmer H
- **Year:** 2004
- **Acreage:** 150 acres, 100 acres workable
- **Activities:** Farm equipment repair shop, produce auction, egg grading station

#### 4.1.2 Motivations to Move to Desbarats, Johnson Township

The decision to move to the Desbarats area took a considerable amount of time and careful planning. In fact, the Desbarats area was not initially considered by this group of Old Order Mennonites until they met with a representative from OMAFRA in the Manitoulin area. They had planned a caravan tour of potential communities, including northern Ontario and eastern Manitoba. While reviewing the landscape of Massey, they met up with a representative from OMAFRA who recommended they explore the Desbarats area. The scouting group continued on their tour to Manitoba and stopped in the Desbarats area along their way. This proved to be fortuitous, as upon their return to southern Ontario, all reviewed sites were discussed and Desbarats, with lower costs per acre, as well as an abundance of unutilized farmland, was viewed as most appropriate and suitable for their lifestyle.

Every farmer that participated in an interview noted the cost of farmland as their primary reason for moving to northern Ontario. Each participant spoke about the importance of helping the next generation of farmers, their children, buy a farm as it was
not considered possible in southern Ontario. As noted by Farmer B, “it’s too competitive in southern Ontario for our way of life. It’s just not possible to keep families on the farm.” This competition was not limited to non-Mennonite farmers, as Farmer D noted that the competition for land was a concern within the Mennonite community. This is understandable as many of the families have upwards of 10 children and if half of those children are boys that want to remain in agriculture, the competition to purchase a farm is high. As stated by Farmer F, “my boys wanted to farm but we couldn’t afford land prices in southern Ontario.” Farmer G simply stated, “southern Ontario is full and expensive!” This competition was challenging to the Mennonite lifestyle and much farmland in southern Ontario is too expensive for the smaller-scale farmers to afford.

The cost of farmland in the Desbarats area is significantly lower than in southern Ontario. Farmers in this community moved from Waterloo Region, Huron County and Bruce County, where the cost of farmland currently ranges between $15,000-$20,000 per acre. According to participants, the cost per acre of farmland in Desbarats was $700 per acre in 2005. For an Old Order Mennonite farmer that wants to help his children establish a farm, northern Ontario and the Desbarats area in particular make this goal financially possible. It was also noted by participants that the cost of land is relative, as significant inputs are needed, such as manure, nutrients and tile drainage. As a result, the cost does increase; however, it is still significantly cheaper per acre when compared to southern Ontario. According to one farmer, “the price of farmland is less in northern Ontario, but it certainly has to be a lot lower as there are so many disadvantages here
compared to southern Ontario.” This is, perhaps, a more realistic view of why the land is so affordable and the reality of agriculture in northern Ontario.

4.1.3 Farming Operations

Farming operations within the Desbarats area Old Order Mennonite community were extremely diverse. Every interview participant had a variety of livestock and cropland for growing feed. Livestock was diverse and included beef cattle, sheep, pigs, laying hens and broiler chickens. Informally, participants noted that other farmers in the area were also raising goats, veal and turkeys. Additionally, most community members would have at least one dairy cow for personal consumption and a number of horses for transportation and cropping. Many of the participants also engaged in producing vegetables for sale at their roadside stand, the community co-operative store or the local produce auction. Vegetables were also diverse and included legumes, root vegetables and lettuce, among others. Fresh fruit, in particular melons, were also being grown with great success. A number of comments were captured by participants regarding their motivations to diversify their operations and these are provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Comments from Old Order Mennonites in the Desbarats area regarding their decision to diversify their farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To help keep us afloat while other farm related pursuits are being developed and to provide work and income during the winter months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is hard to pay off a farm with just farm products due to high feed and seed, fertilizer cost and lack of available labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We pickle and can to make use of cucumbers that we didn’t have sale for and to make use of our #2 strawberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Because it was necessary for the success of the farm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to these farm activities, a variety of diversified uses both related and unrelated to agriculture were common. For example, some value-added activities were occurring in the community related to the processing of meat, fruits and vegetables. Available at the co-operative store and roadside stands were flours (e.g., spelt and white), fresh cut flowers, baked goods, canned goods and jams. It was also possible to pre-order fresh meat through the co-operative store based on a pre-determined processing schedule. As was previously mentioned, this community is considered Orthodox Old Order Mennonite and does not use modern technology. As a result, all goods for sale were either intended for fresh consumption (e.g. baked goods) or were preserved (e.g. canned goods). Many non-farm related secondary businesses were also evident within the community. Participants noted a variety of services, such as a sawmill, lumber for sale, carpentry services, manufacturing and equipment repair, among others. Outside of interviews, these uses were obvious, as many farmers had signs at the end of their driveway that noted the products or services available. Examples of such signs are depicted in Figure 4.4.
Two of the more advanced enterprises within the community were related to the sale of agricultural goods directly to consumers. The first business was a community cooperative store that sold a variety of fresh produce, baked goods, canned goods and non-agricultural products, such as belts and laundry drying racks. According to the store manager, the structure of the store was loosely based around a co-operative model, in which farmers pay a fee to have their products sold through the store. The store also acts as a wholesale distributor, shipping food as far away as Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, Manitoba. Farmer C runs the co-operative store and noted the complexity of working with different growers, as well as the challenges associated with logistical details. The store has been quite successful and has provided local residents with a year-round location to purchase fresh produce and other food.

The second enterprise is a produce auction that was first established in the summer of 2016. Many of the Mennonite farmers now in Desbarats were familiar with

Figure 4.4: Roadside signs advertising products for sale at Old Order Mennonite farms in northern Ontario
the Elmira Produce Auction operated by the Mennonite community in Elmira. Many of the Old Order Mennonites in Desbarats had sold their produce at the Elmira Produce Auction in southern Ontario, and preferred the auction model for sales. Significant planning and community deliberations occurred before the produce auction was established. Some community fears included the impact the auction would have on the co-operative store, the availability of buyers and the financial risks associated with this sales model. In November 2016, after the first season of the auction, community members were unsure of the endeavour. As Farmer B noted it was encouraging and disappointing. It started July 5th and ended the last week of October. Some buyers said they would come but they didn’t show and we always hoped that more would show up. We need to keep at it for three years and then make a decision about its future. Friends in southern Ontario suggested having it for five years and then making a decision, so maybe we’ll wait.

This sense of determination was clear and during a follow up trip in July 2017, Farmer B was much more optimistic about the auction, as sales were consistent, and interest was high. It is interesting to note that the buyers included a variety of consumers and market vendors from the Sault Ste. Marie Mill Market. The purchases made by vendors was beneficial as they consistently needed produce for their stands and the farmers in Desbarats were more than willing to provide them. These two business endeavours have allowed the community to control the sale of their products and reduce logistical complexities while ensuring fair prices and maintaining consumer demands.

It is important to note that the growth of the produce auction resulted in decline for the co-operative store. When the produce auction was being planned, 25
shareholders in the store withdrew their support in favour of a produce auction, reducing the total number of co-operative shareholders to five. The availability of produce within the store was drastically reduced as farmers were now supplying the auction and not the store. Some conflict was evident in this transition and given the challenges of the produce auction’s first year, some regrets were likely felt. While the produce auction did well in 2017, its long-term success is unknown and the long-term impact on the co-operative store remains to be seen. The establishment of new partnerships has benefitted the store, but this places a reliance on long-distance consumers that require additional logistical planning. It is important to note that the produce auction only sells produce from the Old Order Mennonite community. New non-Mennonite farmers in the north commented on the success of the auction and their inability to participate as growers. Non-Mennonite farmers experienced similar struggles regarding market access and were further limited due to their inability to participate as a grower at the produce auction.

4.1.4 Community Interactions

The support from local residents has been one critical element to their success. First, the former mayor was a major advocate for the community and was determined to work with this group in whatever manner was necessary. This assistance has been both professional and personal in nature. Professionally, the former mayor worked with the community when they first arrived to make sure their transition was smooth and to assess any needs. Further, the former mayor has worked with the community through the farmers’ market, which was established after the Mennonites moved to the area.
The former mayor’s relationship with the community has remained strong in her post-political life assignment and has become more personal in nature; this Mennonite community does not use any form of modern technology, which is complicated in the ever-modernizing Canadian system. All paperwork related to birth records and death notices, among others, are submitted online, via the former mayor and any certification associated with these applications are printed and returned to the Mennonites. This is an incredible partnership that has evolved considerably and is successful due to a high level of mutual trust and respect.

A second source of support has been through the local OMAFRA representative. Most regulation changes, applications associated with agriculture and other necessary correspondence between the farming community and OMAFRA are completed online. In an effort to work with the Old Order Mennonite community, access to information has been broadened and the local OMAFRA office has worked directly with this community regarding regulation changes. One aspect in particular that has been quite important, is certification through the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) program. The GAP program focuses on food safety including hazards, safety and reporting procedures. The Old Order Mennonite community has been motivated to get their products into Algoma District restaurants, but this certification is necessary for food safety standards. The local OMAFRA representative has worked hard at being a point of contact for the Mennonite community and strives greatly to connect them with the appropriate ministry personnel.
Finally, support from the local community has had an impact on the success of agricultural operations. One farmer noted that the local population has been a driving force influencing what is planted, as certain produce, such as melons and berries, has been in high demand. Initially, when the Old Order Mennonites moved to the Desbarats area, they grew a variety of produce that had never been planted in this region. As noted by the former mayor, “the perception used to be that you couldn’t grow fruits or certain vegetables here, but the Mennonites didn’t know any better. They just grew what they grew back home. It was hard to convince the locals that melons were grown here. I literally had to take some people out to the farms just to prove it!” The novelty associated with this fresh produce has resulted in high levels of local consumption and residents purchasing directly from the Mennonites. This demand further influences what is grown by the community and the significant expansion of market gardens on many of the local farms. Such relationships are critical within agriculture, as the buyer has a lot of control over a farm’s success.

4.1.5 Future Opportunities

The Desbarats Old Order Mennonites have taken advantage of many opportunities, diversified their farm endeavours and worked closely with the local population. There are, however, additional opportunities for this community, including value-added goods, increased partnerships and the continued growth of the Mennonite community. Value-added goods are quite limited within this community. While there is at least one farmer producing flour from their grain and canned goods are readily available, few other options have been explored by the community. Curing and drying
meat, for example, does not appear to be an activity within the community. Products like summer sausage, a stereotypically Mennonite product, is available for purchase at the co-operative store but is not produced within the community. This lack of production could be related to technological limitations, health regulations or lack of skilled labour but the opportunity does exist.

Partnerships with the Desbarats Old Order Mennonite community are unique, as they are not easy to contact given their refusal to use telephones. As a result, the partnerships with food distributors in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg are interesting and demonstrate the potential to seek or be sought for other partnerships. It was noted by participants that their products are not being sent farther north but considering the geographic distance to Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, opportunities to supply more northern markets should be considered. Such partnerships would continue to expand their consumer base and diversify their customers. There are also opportunities to partner with value-added processors that do utilize modern technology and are aware of product safety regulations. While challenges in dealing with the local abattoir were noted, other processors could be utilized, or the community could apply for their own abattoir, which other Mennonite communities have done successfully.

Finally, the scale of agriculture is significantly limited by their personal workforce and utilization of horses for cropping. While tractors and other modern farm equipment are not an option in this community, the steadily increasing population base will expand the area farmed and the scale of agriculture within Desbarats will increase. One farmer noted that currently, they cannot attract large-scale buyers to their produce auction
because the community does not have the capacity to support them. As such, the auction is limited in produce quantity even though the potential demand is significantly higher. As the next generation of farmers from this community begin their own farms and establish their own households, the amount of land in agricultural production and the scale of products available will undoubtedly increase. The second generation is slowly growing up and every farmer indicated that their children intend to stay in the north, so agricultural expansion is anticipated. Farmer E reflected on the opportunities available in northern Ontario and the time needed for them to be realized, stating, “farming in Northern Ontario has huge potential but a longer period of time is going to be needed to establish services and markets. Factory farms will likely never thrive thus providing opportunity for family farms.” Such positive reflections were common, and the smaller-scale model they feel is appropriate in the north matches the ideal vision of the Mennonite farm structure, as stated by Farmer H:

It has never been the Anabaptist vision ‘to get rich quick’ and as such, I feel that the north has pretty well come up to or rather, surpassed my expectations. It is a rugged land with constant challenges – at the same time I feel it is a more suitable environment for the Anabaptist vision than a thriving productive progressive environment.

4.1.6 Lingering Challenges

While the community does appear to have thrived in this northern town, there are a number of challenges that impact their viability and future endeavours: technological advancements, the natural environment and availability of services. Embracing technology is not a consideration for this community but as agriculture continues to
modernize and the policies around production and distribution change, ignoring technology leaves this community vulnerable. They have been fortunate in fostering partnerships and arrangements with non-Mennonites for accessing documentation and submitting necessary paperwork but this reliance on outsiders is risky. If the current OMAFRA representative retires or the ministry policies change to not allow such arrangements, the Desbarats community will be disadvantaged. Further, if the former mayor moves away or is unavailable when they need assistance, they will be forced to make new partnerships, accept certain technologies or decline as a community.

The natural environment was identified by every farmer to be a challenge that they have tried to accept. This challenge was not limited to the Old Order Mennonite community, as new, non-Mennonite farmers expressed similar concerns. While daylight in the summer is longer, the spring frost lingers, and the fall frost arrives earlier than their experiences in southern Ontario. Currently, many farmers are utilizing row covers and greenhouses to start their crops earlier, but this too is risky given extreme climatic conditions. While they have managed to adapt to the climate, an extremely late spring could result in a failed agricultural season and lack of income for most members of the community. Those with diversified non-farm related activities may survive such conditions but not every farmer had non-farm businesses. Their faith and strong sense of community would offer some support, but community-wide challenges have not yet been faced, so their ability to cope is unknown.

After moving to northern Ontario, many participants were surprised by the differences in cost for services and supplies due to limited availability. The distance to
markets is significant in Desbarats, especially if products are being shipped to Thunder Bay or Winnipeg. As there are not many transport drivers in this area, the set rate is higher than they were used to in southern Ontario and the lack of competition gives them few options. The issue with the distance is also associated with purchasing the necessary supplies and accessing appropriate services when needed. There is a not a local feed or equipment store and the local abattoir is considered unreliable. As a result, the community relies on their networks in southern Ontario for supplies and have been shipping their animals out of the area for processing. A reliance on networks in southern Ontario was unique to the Old Order Mennonite community, as non-Mennonite farmers in the north lacked these connections and as a result, were often at a disadvantage. These decisions have resulted in higher costs, thereby lowering profits and threatening the viability of the farms. It is possible that as the farming community grows, more services will be available and with increased competition, the associated costs will decrease; however, to date, service availability has not improved and competition is still extremely low.

4.1.7 Impacts of Scale

The Old Order Mennonites in the Desbarats area operated within and were impacted by a variety of scales. At the individual farm level, household decisions impacted what was produced on the farm, the types of diversification activities and nature of sideline businesses. These individual decisions were also impacted by the broader Old Order Mennonite community, as activities, such as the produce auction, were not undertaken without community support. The Old Order Mennonite community
also determines if technology would be adopted and to what extent. Within the Desbarats Mennonite community, technology was extremely limited but during data collection, it was apparent that some members of the community wanted to broaden technological adoption. During data collection, the community was debating the adoption of bicycles and rubber wheels on the buggy; however, use of both the bicycles and rubber wheels for the buggies were eventually rejected. While the use of these two modern conveniences may seem benign, this is an Orthodox community and modern technology is extremely limited.

Decisions made at the Mennonite community level can be as impactful as decisions made at the farm level. It is important to note that at the farm level, a bicycle may have improved efficiency and decreased costs for short term travel and rubber wheels would have reduced the wear on buggy wheels, but the decision was made at the community level. While this Mennonite community’s decision may negatively impact the farmer, it serves to maintain the Orthodox Old Order Mennonite lifestyle. Acceptance of one minor technology is viewed as a threat to the community’s lifestyle and core beliefs and as such, these decisions require significant debate and reflection. Other decisions made at the community level include the construction and location of community buildings (e.g. schools and meeting places) and participation in the local farmers’ market. The challenges associated with technological adoption were viewed as uniquely Mennonite, as other farmers in the area readily used modern technology and viewed it as a necessity for effective and efficient farm management.
Moving outward in scale, the broader community of Desbarats has impacted the Old Order Mennonite community and individual farmer. At the Desbarats scale, in terms of political structure, the Old Order Mennonites are dependent on the town for land use planning decisions, building permits and other regulatory policies. The Old Order Mennonites moved to the Desbarats area with the intention of purchasing farms that can be severed for their children and as one farmer noted, the policies related to severances and road access, in particular, are challenging. This farmer’s request for a severance was met with public opposition and was eventually denied due to his location on a provincial highway. Such unsupportive decisions were not anticipated by the Mennonites but they are a possibility and they do impact the potential growth of the community and individual farmers’ future plans.

In terms of positive influences of scale, the Old Order Mennonites have been supported by community members within the Desbarats area and more broadly, within northern Ontario. Support for the Mennonites is evident through the purchase of their goods, visiting their farms and welcoming their community. Fresh produce from this Old Order Mennonite community has been purchased by Desbarats area residents, retailers and consumers in Sault Ste. Marie. It is also being regularly shipped to Thunder Bay, Sudbury and outside of Ontario, to Winnipeg. These large-scale purchases have influenced the type of produce grown, as Farmer C noted that many farmers grow cabbage specifically for shipment to Winnipeg. These partnerships outside of the Desbarats area have provided consistent sales for the farmers and created a more robust agricultural industry. There is potential to enhance relationships with the broader
farm community to share knowledge, enhance the sector and, where appropriate, reduce costs. Strong relationships have been established within the Old Order Mennonite community, but opportunities exist to work with other farmers in the area.

Lastly, this community has also been impacted by the province, as agricultural regulations impact the individual farmer and greater agricultural community. Regulations regarding goats’ milk have been a frustration for this community, given their avoidance of technology and inability to access the appropriate documents online without external assistance. Further, regulations regarding the proper labeling of food and traceability requirements have impacted the sale of certain produce to large-scale buyers such as restaurants and grocery stores. While OMAFRA has worked with this community to enhance their knowledge of regulations and provide GAP certification, it is considerably more difficult to remain up-to-date with policy and regulations without the use of a computer or telephone.

4.1.8 Demonstration of Resilience?

When assessing this community's resilience, there are many hazards that leave the community vulnerable, therefore impacting their resilience. The challenges identified above may weaken the long-term viability of this community but the expectation that the migration of Old Order Mennonite farmers from southern Ontario will continue and the existing children will start their own families in the north, increases their adaptive capacity. At a foundational level, their strong cultural values and religious beliefs give them faith that the farms and families will persevere in times of stress. The communal mindset of Old Order Mennonites and expectations of charity with their neighbours will
also improve the adaptive capacity of an individual. Further, their utilization of diversified farm and non-farm activities and recognition of the challenges associated with northern Ontario strengthen both the individual farmer and Old Order Mennonite community. As such, their move to the north demonstrated the resilience of their extremely traditional values and their current activities reduce the overall vulnerability of the community, even when individual vulnerability may be high. Figure 4.5 provides a diagram mapping the resilience framework of the community, noting the various hazards and vulnerabilities but ultimately, demonstrating resilience.

![Desbarats Community Resilience Framework](image)

**Figure 4.5: Applying the resilience framework to the Desbarats area Orthodox Old Order Mennonite community**

Within the framework of resilience portrayed above, a variety of hazards and vulnerabilities impact the community’s adaptive capacity and, ultimately, resilience. The findings demonstrate some significant hazards that are heightened due to a reliance on non-Mennonite community members. For example, the community is vulnerable due to regulatory changes and their avoidance of technology limits their access to information.
As a result, their adaptive capacity in such situations is low and the community faces decline in some agricultural products and value-added goods. While not discussed above, many farmers were interested in opportunities to diversify into goat milk, but they were unsure of the regulatory framework, logistical details or potential market. If goat milk is a diversified product they want to develop, they will need a greater understanding of the regulatory system and technological requirements for milking, storing and potentially, processing.

Alternately, the community has demonstrated lower vulnerabilities and higher adaptive capacity associated with diversification, strong support from the Desbarats community and maintenance of cultural convictions and religious beliefs. As a result, this impacted their ability to be resilient through diversification strategies, partnerships and building of social capital both internal to the Mennonite community and, more broadly, within Algoma District. It is important to note that some transformations have also occurred; in particular, their community structure was moderately transformed with a move to the north and the services they offer have been tailored to their northern location.

4.2 Black River-Matheson

“I’ve enjoyed every minute being up here in the north. I have no regrets but you have to be prepared for the challenges and recognize that not everything is going to go as smoothly as it did back in the south. The first year we didn’t have enough feed for our cows because the land didn’t produce. That was unexpected but nothing was as expected that first year.”
The town of Black River-Matheson is the most northern community of the three study sites. As noted earlier, the population of Black River-Matheson is 2,438 and the population base has been relatively stable over the past 15 years. The first five families of Old Order Mennonites moved to the town in 2013 and over the past five years, the number of Old Order Mennonite families has increased significantly, with 30 families (approximately 150 people) presently in the town. Figure 4.6 is a hand drawn map from the Old Order Mennonite community documenting where individuals live within the town and the size of their farm parcels. This map was also purchased from a Christian store in Elmira. The map provides a visual representation of the size of farm operations and the significant geographic distance between Old Order Mennonite households. While some farmers own more than one parcel within the community, many of the apparent duplicate names are actually individual farmers that share the name of someone else in the community. The level of detail and accuracy of information presented on the map is high and the map is regularly updated as new families arrive or new farm parcels are purchased or severed. Of interest, the map also highlights important geographic features within Black River-Matheson, such as the location of gold mines, railway line, roads and bodies of water.

Characteristics of Participants

Within Black River-Matheson, seven members of the Old Order Mennonite community participated in an interview. In addition to these interviews, representatives from OMAFRA, NOFIA and the OFA, as well as three non-Mennonite farmers, a local municipal councillor and a representative from the NeCN also provided insight into this
Figure 4.6: Map depicting farm parcels of Old Order Mennonites in Black River-Matheson
case study. Table 4.3 provides an overview of the Old Order Mennonite participants, including farm size, type of farm and how long they have lived in Black River-Matheson.

Table 4.3: Characteristics of Black River-Matheson Old Order Mennonite interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer</th>
<th>Date of Move</th>
<th>Size of Farm</th>
<th>Farm Activities</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer A</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>900 acres, 200 acres cleared</td>
<td>Dairy with 26 cows, 100 laying hens, peas, oats and barley for sileage</td>
<td>Egg grading station, Provide peas to local CSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer B</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>267 acres, 190 acres cleared, 35 acres rented</td>
<td>200-250 beef cows, 100 laying hens, 5 acres of sweet corn, 2 acres for market garden, grain for sileage</td>
<td>Road side stand, Fire wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer C</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>1,000 acres, 250 cleared</td>
<td>175 beef cows, cereal and corn sileage, market garden</td>
<td>Metal fabricating, accounting, tire sales and repair, frozen meat, bulk oil sales, hydraulic hose, roadside stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer D</td>
<td>Summer 2015</td>
<td>455 acres, 138 acres cleared, rent 25 acres</td>
<td>Cash cropping, hay, 10 beef cows, feed neighbour’s calves</td>
<td>Carpentry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer E</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>1,600 acres, 570 acres cleared</td>
<td>120 beef cows, cereal and corn sileage, 30 laying hens, 15 acres of potatoes</td>
<td>Grass seed dealer, saw mill, excavation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.2.1 Motivations to Move to Black River-Matheson

The move to Black River-Matheson was not a simple process and the ultimate decision was made through community discussions in southern Ontario. The selection of Black River-Matheson for a potential Old Order Mennonite community occurred after an extensive search. This search was initiated after an article in *Ontario Farmer* identified communities in northern Ontario with abundant, reasonably priced farmland. Upon reading this article, a group from southern Ontario scouted various locations in northern Ontario, eventually selecting Black River-Matheson. A committee was created in southern Ontario and a number of farm parcels were purchased, totaling 4,000 acres. Through support and encouragement from the church, five families committed to the move, with each family agreeing to purchase various parcels of land. According to participants, Black River-Matheson was selected due to the abundance of available farmland and a perceived need for agriculture in the community; however, this was not necessarily their motivation to move.
Every farmer that participated in an interview explained their motivation for moving to Black River-Matheson and “family” was a consistent response. It was noted by several participants that the cost of farmland in southern Ontario was too high and that opportunities to purchase farmland for their sons were limited. The cost of farmland in some of the communities they came from was approximately $20,000 per acre, while the cost of land in Black River-Matheson was approximately $1,500 per acre. As each father intended to purchase farms for their sons, it was evident to them that they could not afford to buy each of their children a farm in southern Ontario. As Farmer C stated, “the boys were getting older and they wanted to farm but there were hardly any farms available. Those that were, were very pricey. We’re taught to farm as low key as possible. We’re not the wealthiest people and our goal was to be out of debt at some time in life and we saw the opportunity in the north.” The importance of family and family dynamics was evident, as simply stated by Farmer A, “I was looking for an opportunity for my family.” Farmer E provided greater detail regarding his family’s decision to move:

if I didn’t have a family, I probably wouldn’t be here. We had a food processing outfit down south, but the oldest son wasn’t interested in it – he wanted to farm. We were at a crossroads with the business we had. In reality, farms in southern Ontario can’t support the cost of land but up here, the farm can. The possibility of having our son out on his own farm, with the hopes of my other sons doing the same, was better in the north.

Such decisions to move were not taken lightly as each participant had an established business in southern Ontario. Farmer D discussed the financial hardship they would have faced if they did not move, “setting up the boys down south on a farm would have been a million dollars minimum and I just didn’t have the heart to do it.” Farmer D also
noted, the decision to move to northern Ontario was hard, given the remoteness of the town, “I looked at the map to see where Matheson was, and said ‘no, not happening’.” The importance, however, of providing opportunities for future generations significantly influenced each of their decisions.

For a few participants, the motivation to move to northern Ontario was not limited to land availability. For some, cultural reasons were more important and there was a sense that the Old Order Mennonite culture was slowly being eroded in southern Ontario. According to Farmer B:

it was increasingly more difficult to stay away from modern technology. Most of the people that moved in this group are hoping to work together more and stay away from more modern technology. More people from southern Ontario are moving on from driving horses and we’re hoping that if we stay up here, we won’t use that technology. Peer pressure gets quite strong, but we want to maintain our cultural beliefs and I think that’s easier to do in the north.

Foundational to Old Order Mennonites is their spiritual and cultural beliefs, particularly around the use of a horse and buggy and limited use of modern technology. Given the lower population density in Black River Matheson, the pressure to convert to more modern technologies may be less obvious.

It is important to note that while family was the motivation to move, it was not an easy decision or one that the entire family supported. For many of the participants, their children viewed the move negatively as it meant leaving friends and family behind. Families with young children did not experience as much negativity, as the move was viewed as an adventure. All participants did note that their children, even those not
initially in favour of the move, intend to stay in Black River-Matheson and are happy with the move. Some of the older children have married since 2013 and started their own families on their own farm parcels. Indeed, there is great optimism within the community that more families will move to the area and the older children will start their own families and increase the population base.

4.2.2 Farming Operations

Agricultural viability within the Black River-Matheson Mennonite community is dependent upon innovation, ingenuity and determination. Critical to this is the diversification of agricultural operations both at the farm gate and beyond. Every participant within this community characterized their farm as a mixed operation, with additional non-farm activities supplementing the household. With every participant, a variety of livestock existed on the farm for household needs, as well as commercial purposes. Only one participant identified as a dairy farmer; however, dairy cows for household consumption were common. Further, every farmer had laying hens, up to the provincial maximum of 100 birds. While many of the farmers did not meet that threshold, every farmer had laying hens for household needs but most sold eggs to the general population. In addition to livestock, each participant noted the production of a variety of crops. While scale varied by household, most farmers were growing feed, such as oats, corn and barely, in addition to pasture land and hay. The importance of growing feed was noted by most participants, as the cost associated with shipping is significantly higher; expenditures are lowered when the feed is grown on the farm. Beyond feed, participants were also growing a variety of fresh produce including peas, carrots, sweet
corn, melons, strawberries, potatoes and onions, among others. The scale of produce production was generally limited and intended for sale at roadside stands, the farmers market in Iroquois Falls and the CSA organized and marketed by a non-Mennonite farmer.

The diversification of farm operations included a number of activities related to agriculture and many that were unrelated. As noted by one farmer, every Mennonite in Black River-Matheson has a “sideline business” to supplement the farm income and provide work in the winter months. Farmer D was reflective of agricultural diversification stating

if you’re not a dairy farmer, you need to be aggressive and large-scale or have secondary options. I promote myself to not have your eggs in one basket, this keeps you from having to go big scale. When you go big, it might be good, but if it goes bad, it’s going to go very bad. Diversification isn’t talked about among Mennonites. The older generation didn’t have to diversify because their farms were sustainable but since the 1980s, if you want to stay on the farm, you need to be big business. But we don’t promote big business. If you want to be a small-scale family farmer, you’re not going to be sustainable, so you have to have options.

Diversification was not a term many of the participants used. They typically referred to their farms as “mixed”, while also noting a variety of “sideline businesses”. These sideline businesses were quite diverse and included farm-related operations, such as an egg grader, cattle scale station, equipment repair, seed distribution and fabrication of farm equipment, among others. The sideline businesses unrelated to agriculture demonstrated the diverse skillset within the community and included excavation, carpentry, accounting and firewood sales. While not formally discussed, many of the
households also sold baked goods, canned goods, quilts and other household products. These endeavours are typically undertaken by a farmer's spouse or daughters and were not openly discussed as part of the farm or sideline businesses.

An interesting facet of these diversified activities is the partnerships that have been formed with non-Mennonites to sell their products. Many Old Order Mennonites grow food for the local CSA; however, it is organized, marketed and delivered by a non-Mennonite farmer in Black River-Matheson. While conducting interviews in February, participants also informed me of a recent partnership with a First Nations community in Moosonee. Through a local non-Mennonite, and the Moosonee mayor, fresh produce, baked goods and canned food would be transported weekly to Moosonee and sold at a farmer's market. One market had taken place prior to the interviews and participants were pleased that all of the food had sold out and they had been invited back on a weekly basis. The participants noted a desire to work with First Nations communities in an effort to both improve food security and diversify their consumer base. Farmer A stated “they are looking to get affordable, healthy, locally grown food there. There’s no competition up there, there’s no roads up there. Our goal is to get them meat, eggs and vegetables. We sold 140 dozen eggs in 40 minutes at our first market!” These initiatives likely would not have been possible without assistance of individuals outside of the Mennonite community, given the various logistical, transportation and promotional requirements.

The final agricultural characteristic of this community relates to their adaptability and ingenuity. Many of the sideline businesses within the community arose strictly out of
need. Participants spoke of two other community members that created businesses around tile drainage. Given the clay soils dominant in the area, most farmers recognized the need to tile drain the land in order to control water and ultimately promote the productivity of the land. Given the absence of a local contractor for this work, two brothers created a tile draining business, with one brother creating the tile and the other installing it. This was strictly a needs-based operation, as neither individual had prior experience but in order to be successful, they recognized the value of that business. Stated simply by Farmer A, “we see a need and we fill that service.” The egg grading station, local store and many other sideline businesses were created due to a recognized absence and community need. It is important to note that many of these businesses serve the broader community of Black River-Matheson, as the need extends beyond Old Order Mennonites. As such, the broader community of Black River-Matheson has benefitted significantly from these diversified agricultural operations.

4.2.3 Community Interactions

The Old Order Mennonites have received significant support from the broader community of Black River-Matheson. This support was initially received from the former mayor, as he was supportive of their move and wanted to work with them and create a welcoming environment. Farmer B felt welcomed by the community as “the people in the area were so happy that people were coming to use the land. It seemed like they had their arms open wide, welcoming us.” Farmer E had a similar response and commented that the residents have not been a hindrance to their community or their activities.
Beyond community support, it is also evident that the Old Order Mennonites have been beneficial to the broader community of Black River-Matheson. Farmer D reflected on the impact of their move on the broader community, stating “one thing I do know, usually when there’s agriculture, the economy flourishes. There are signs of that here, that it’s happening. With land being productive, the buildings going up, the spinoff benefits and businesses are huge.” Black River-Matheson has a varied agricultural history that at one point in time was quite successful. Many farms were overgrown and associated buildings in a state of disrepair. The influx of Old Order Mennonites reworking old farmland has been positively regarded by residents and the benefits to the town are clearly evident. Non-Mennonite farmers also noted the positive influence of the Old Order Mennonite community, as an influx in farmers was building capacity within the agricultural sector.

One of the most important community interactions is regarding improved access to locally produced fresh food. Farmer B was pleased with the level of interest from both local residents and those at a greater distance, “a lot of people from Timmins who have cottages around here and people from Kirkland Lake and Iroquois Falls are regular customers. Some people will drive here on a weekly basis to get their vegetables and eggs.” This high consumer demand is a challenge, as growing fresh produce, in addition to livestock operations and sideline businesses, is time consuming. Farmer F reflected on this “we have a roadside stand and it caused a lot of excitement that first year from the locals. They were excited for fresh vegetables but it’s not our main focus and it takes a lot of time.” The desire to diversify agricultural operations and support from local
residents has kept the roadside stand in operation, even though time management conflicts abound.

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths within the Old Order Mennonite community is their strong sense of community both within their culture and their larger community. They demonstrate a strong level of support and sense of duty within the Mennonite community. Many farmers reflected on the strength of their cultural community in making their move to Black River-Matheson successful. When they first moved to the area, much work repairing or constructing buildings was necessary. Farmer E commented that the support was critical when they first moved,

we’ve had a lot of help from the community down south to get going up here, it really was a big plus. It’s tapering off now, but we can now plan a [barn] raising with the guys up here and get a barn up in one day. If I needed local help [non-Mennonite], well now I don’t know. We haven’t tested that, but my impression is that workers are available if someone wants to commit themselves. There’s dependable people in this town.

Farmer D echoed these comments noting that this sense of camaraderie was an integral part of a community and Farmer C stated emphatically, “I couldn’t be here without community… couldn’t have done it without community support.” Farmer C also noted that voluntary assistance and camaraderie is not limited to the Mennonite community but the broader town as well. If there is a recognized need, they are also willing to assist, and that assistance is not limited to Mennonites.
4.2.4 Future Opportunities

There are a number of opportunities for agricultural expansion, increased promotion of agriculture and opportunities for partnership. As noted by all of the participants, their children have no interest in moving back to southern Ontario. Considering this, over the next decade, the number of Old Order Mennonite families in Black River-Matheson is likely to increase significantly. With this increase, it is anticipated that the types of agricultural operations, diversification strategies and volume of agricultural products will also increase. Some farmers spoke openly about opportunities for other livestock sectors, including water buffalo and goats, as well as other opportunities around food processing and value-added goods. This continued diversification will be beneficial to both the Old Order Mennonites, as well as the broader population of Black River-Matheson and surrounding communities.

There is a general sense of optimism within this community and a feeling of accomplishment. Farmer C noted the positive feeling farming in Black River-Matheson provided, “I think about how rewarding and fulfilling it was to resurrect these old farms; to rotate the corps, to haul manure, to tiling the land. You look back after five years and think ‘wow, what a difference.’” This fulfilling experience and demonstration of success may encourage the migration of other Old Order Mennonites to Black River-Matheson, which will encourage greater production of agricultural goods. One of the goals of this community is to produce food in the north for northern consumption, as costs will decrease if products are not shipped back to southern Ontario. With an increased
population base and diversification strategies, it is likely that a greater proportion of their products will be consumed in the north.

Increasing value-added opportunities and northern consumption will be dependent upon partnerships with non-Mennonites. As the Old Order Mennonite community does not engage in advertising beyond a sign at the end of their driveway, marketing beyond Black River-Matheson will be necessary. The success of partnerships and marketing by non-Mennonite farmers has already been demonstrated with the farmers’ market in Moosonee and the local CSA. The Old Order Mennonites are also active in the Iroquois Falls farmers’ market, and their participation is supported by non-Mennonite farmers. Without the Old Order Mennonites, there was a sense that the farmers’ market could not be sustained by the non-Mennonite farmers as their production could not keep up with demand. Identifying new opportunities for partnerships will be important to increase distribution and find new markets. The level of determination and ingenuity is high within the Old Order Mennonite community and it is unrealistic to assume that new partnerships and opportunities are limited.

4.2.5 Lingering Challenges

While there are many successes and future opportunities for growth and development, participants also noted a variety of challenges. In particular, issues related to labour, environmental conditions, increased costs, and technology were evident. Labour issues are heightened in northern Ontario as lower populations and greater geographic distance between towns results in labour shortages. Within this Old Order Mennonite community, it was noted that most of the families moved up with older
children, so internal labour needs were generally satisfied. Skilled labour, however, was a significant challenge, as access to electricians, plumbers and veterinarians, among others, were limited. Further, many farmers noted the higher costs associated with these professions, as well as the lack of familiarity with the needs of a farm. This was particularly evident when discussing the closest veterinarian, as they did not specialize in large animals and at times, a veterinarian from southern Ontario was hired at crucial times. This limited access and increased cost impact farm viability and require additional scheduling considerations.

Environmental conditions were an interesting topic to discuss, as some farmers had no concerns and others felt the climate and soil quality were significant concerns. Black River-Matheson is the most northern of the three case study sites and temperature fluctuations are quite different from southern Ontario. Challenges that were identified focused on the lateness of spring, the earliness of fall frosts and overall, the shorter growing season. For farmers growing fresh produce, the importance of greenhouses for growing seedlings and hoop houses for protecting planted crops was stressed. These activities eliminate some of the growing challenges and as one farmer noted, their produce was available at the same time as southern Ontario. Climate was also viewed as a challenge for growing certain feed, with corn being viewed as particularly susceptible to weather conditions. While many in the community have worked to grow corn for sileage with mixed success, Farmer A bluntly stated, “leave the corn down south.” Farmer A also noted the importance of adapting to the climate and has had great success growing grains and mixed success with fresh produce.
Soil was also noted as a concern, as it required significant inputs when they first arrived. Every participant commented on the need to add nutrients and manure to the soil and the necessity to tile drain. Farmer D commented on the quality of the soil stating, “soil and production is definitely an issue. It’s good soil but it’s been neglected.” As was noted earlier, in recognizing the need to tile drain the land, two members of the community began a tile drainage business. This proved beneficial as every farmer has made investment to tile drain their land in order to improve crop production. The importance of improving soil quality was also discussed by non-Mennonite farmers and representatives from the farm organizations. Tile drainage was viewed as a necessity by all participants, but non-Mennonite farmers also noted their support of provincial funding to assist with tile drainage. Such financial assistance was not utilized by the Old Order Mennonite community due to religious beliefs.

In moving to northern Ontario, many of the participants commented on the difference in costs associated with equipment, feed and services. Given the lower population and population density, fewer services are available and the distance to deliver products is significantly greater. As a result, the associated costs increase as delivery charges are significantly higher than when they were in southern Ontario. Farmer E commented on the impact of high shipping rates, especially when shipping half loads of cattle to southern Ontario. Due to lack of coordination with other community members, shipping arrangements are made independently and may result in multiple loads of cattle that are not full. As a result, profits are eroded across the community. Farmer C noted creativity in arranging transportation of goods from
southern Ontario, as he arranged a partnership with a local truck driver. This driver regularly travels with loads to southern Ontario and through an arrangement with Farmer C, returns to the north with a load of goods from the south. This was a mutually beneficial arrangement as the driver returned to the north with a full load and Farmer C found a more reasonable shipping price. Gaining access to farm supplies was also challenging for many farmers, particularly when they first moved to Black River-Matheson. While access is not as great an issue since Farmer F created a community store, the location of the store is not convenient for everyone and access remains a limitation. The municipal councillor spoke favourably of the community store and noted its broad use by the farming community, given their sale of feed, seed and other farm products.

Technology was a topic that was discussed with every participant, but conversations often focused on the community’s reluctance to adopt new technologies and maintain their cultural traditions. This reluctance to utilize technology has been a challenge for the community, as they were unaware of surplus land sales by the town and changes to product regulations by the government. Many aspects of government operations have become digital, with information posted to websites or shared with farmers via email. The Old Order Mennonite community in Black River-Matheson does not use the internet, computers or cell phones. As a result, it is often difficult to get up-to-date information on regulation changes within agriculture. Regulations enforced by the local health unit are also considered a challenge as the Old Order Mennonite community is unaware of the nuances between farmers’ markets and roadside stands.
Farmer B sold fresh baked goods at the local farmers’ market and through his roadside stand but his roadside stand was eventually barred from selling baked goods due to health regulations. Lack of access to these regulations due in part to self-induced technological limitations prevented Farmer F from understanding that the special permissions granted to farmers’ markets did not apply to roadside stands. This lack of knowledge is a limitation and as regulations change or updates are made, there is a risk that the Old Order Mennonite community will only become aware of such rules through failed inspections.

The Old Order Mennonite community’s avoidance of technology has also impacted their ability to purchase surplus land from the town. When the town of Black River-Matheson was selling off surplus farmland, it was advertised online and in the local newspaper, two places the Old Order Mennonites deliberately avoid. As a result, they did not know about the auction and missed the opportunity to bid on available farmland. In speaking with a local councillor about this topic, it was noted that the Old Order Mennonite’s reluctance to participate in aspects of the broader community, such as attending public meetings or purchasing the local newspaper, limited some of their opportunities within the town. As non-Mennonite farmers noted, such limitations were self-induced and participation within community events would ease this limitation. The councillor further noted his commitment to find alternative options for sharing such news with the Old Order Mennonite community in a manner that is fair to everyone in the town.
4.2.6 Impacts of Scale

A variety of factors operating at different scales impacted many of the decisions made by individual farmers in the larger Old Order Mennonite community in Black River-Matheson. At the smallest scale, decisions made by individual farmers impacted their agricultural endeavours, level of diversification and participation in sideline businesses. These individual farmers were also impacted by decisions made within the Old Order Mennonite community. For example, the decision of one farmer to purchase the local abattoir and move the license to his farm was supported by the community and assistance related to construction and accounting were provided by community members. The support and assistance provided by community members encouraged the successful relocation of the abattoir.

Within the Black River-Matheson community, many factors impacted the Old Order Mennonite community and individual Mennonite farmers. This is most obvious through partnerships such as the local farmers market and the new market created in Moosonee. Without the influence of local community members, these partnerships would not have been established and the sale of fresh produce would have been limited to the farm gate and community store. These partnerships are also evident outside of the Black River-Matheson area through consumers from Timmins, as well as tourists that travel through the town and their impacts on what farmers produce and sell. The CSA partnerships with a non-Mennonite has impacted individual farmers as it only delivers organic produce, thus limiting which farmers can participate and how their produce is grown.
At a provincial scale, regulations from the district’s health unit impacted what products could be sold at a roadside stand. These regulations are created at a provincial level but they impact the individual farmer and in the case of Farmer B, prohibited him from selling certain products. These regulations also impacted the broader community as local residents were accustomed to purchasing freshly baked bread from Farmer B, a product that is no longer available locally. While these regulations are meant to protect consumers, residents of rural communities that lack access to a grocery store or bakery are at a disadvantage when compared to more urban areas and such informal access becomes increasingly important. Provincial regulations, however, impact the local residents, individual farmers and broader community well-being.

4.2.7 Demonstration of Resilience?

Understanding how this community has demonstrated resilience is complex, given the variety of challenges and opportunities participants noted and the scales that these operate within. At the most basic level, their religious beliefs play a significant role in motivating them to continue when presented with struggles and overcome many of the unique challenges presented in northern Ontario. Farmer F spoke openly about the importance of faith being a foundation of his determination, “it really was a leap of faith. It was too big a move to make without faith.” Farmer C addressed the challenges he has faced, pragmatically commenting that “necessity is the mother of invention. Where on earth is there a place with no challenges?” The determination within this community and their commitment to diversified farm activities, sideline businesses and a variety of
partnerships with non-Mennonites has contributed to their resilience. The resilience framework was applied to this community and an analysis of the various hazards, vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity is provided in Figure 4.3.

![Black River-Matheson Community Resilience Framework](image)

**Figure 4.7:** Applying the resilience framework to the Black River-Matheson Old Order Mennonite community

### 4.3 Massey

“Where we came from, we were so used to having everything at the tips of our fingers in our community. If there was a need, it just got done. I lost my barn in 2000 to a fire before I moved up here. It was a Saturday afternoon and by 8 pm we had saved 200 of 220 cattle. This happened on January 22\(^{nd}\) and on February 23\(^{rd}\), we brought the cattle into a brand-new barn. Last winter, my neighbour, a non-Mennonite, lost his barn to a fire. Sure, they live in a community with people but they don’t have the same sense of community we have. But we knew this guy and he was part of our farming community so we created a committee to rebuild his barn. We had volunteers as soon as the committee got organized and we built him a new barn. We know what it’s like to lose a barn and we know how to get things done. The misfortune of losing something to a fire softens people.”

Massey is the most southern location included in this study and in many ways is quite connected to southern Ontario. Located along the Trans-Canada Highway, it is easily accessible by vehicle and the distance to southern Ontario is significantly less
than from Desbarats and Black River-Matheson. Massey’s population has remained relatively stable over the past 15 years, with a population of 3,214 people and population density of 3.9 people per square kilometre as of 2016. The first five Old Order Mennonite families moved to this community in 2006 and presently, there are 25 families. Similar to the other two study sites, the community has produced a map of their farm locations and this is provided in Figure 4.8 (below).

4.3.1 Characteristics of Participants

Six members of the Massey Old Order Mennonite community participated in an interview. Supplementary to these interviews were interviews with the town’s current mayor, a representative from OMAFRA and three non-Mennonite farmers. Table 4.4 provides an overview of the Old Order Mennonite participants, including farm size, type of farm and how long they have lived in Massey.
Figure 4.8: Map depicting Old Order Mennonite farm locations in Massey
Table 4.4: Characteristics of farmer participants from Massey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer</th>
<th>Date of Move</th>
<th>Size of Farm</th>
<th>Farm Activities</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer A</td>
<td>Spring 2006</td>
<td>160 acres, mostly cleared</td>
<td>Oats, peas, barley, wheat, hay, 8 sows, 20 beef cows</td>
<td>Owns the local abattoir – focus on GMO free animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer B</td>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
<td>156 acres, 70 acres cleared</td>
<td>200 beef cows, oats, peas barley and hay for feed, market garden</td>
<td>Roadside stand, excavation work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer C</td>
<td>February 2006</td>
<td>45 acres, 40 cleared</td>
<td>Cereals and hay for feed</td>
<td>Small equipment repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer D</td>
<td>Spring 2008</td>
<td>2 acres</td>
<td>Tomatoes via greenhouse</td>
<td>Publishes <em>Anabaptist Forum</em>, bookstore and fabric store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer E</td>
<td>Spring 2006</td>
<td>640 acres</td>
<td>300 acres of crops, 80 beef cows, 499 laying hens</td>
<td>Egg grading station, horse harness and saddle store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer F</td>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
<td>50 acres, mostly cleared</td>
<td>Small herd of beef cows and cropping for feed</td>
<td>Partner with a non-Mennonite to run a community food store and CSA program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2 Motivation to Move to Massey

The motivation to move to northern Ontario was similar to the other two case study sites. Most participants noted the cheaper land price as being their primary motivation. The Massey area was selected as an ideal place for an Old Order Mennonite community after other sites were scouted. Verner, located within Nipissing District, to the northwest of Lake Nipissing, was also considered as a site for a potential
community but Massey was ultimately selected due to the availability of farms and proximity between properties. While no Old Order Mennonite community is currently planned for the Verner area, given the scouting that took place, a future community may be planned. Interestingly, the Massey area had been scouted by the group that moved to Desbarats but was passed over by that group because they did not believe the area had enough available land. Farmer E noted that the differences in lifestyle between the two groups made Massey better suited for them, due in part to their use of tractors. As such, the land available worked well for their community and it was determined that 40 families could eventually settle in the Massey area.

Before any families committed to moving to Massey, a meeting was arranged with the town’s mayor and other staff. This meeting served a variety of purposes but most important was to gauge the town’s willingness to accept the Old Order Mennonites. According to the mayor, there was no concern from the town about their lifestyle or being unable to meet their needs. “It’s been a good experience. They came up a few years before they moved here and discussed some concerns in advance with the municipality. They wanted to know about graveyards, churches, planning and agriculture.” The town viewed the move favourably and were encouraging of the Old Order Mennonites to commit to the move. Before any families moved, there was a meeting in southern Ontario with a local bishop to ensure that enough families were committed to establishing a new community. With both support of the bishop and community, the first five families moved to Massey. While some farmers were excited by the move, such as Farmer D who noted his only regret was not moving sooner, others
were more hesitant. As was good-humouredly discussed by Farmer E, “we didn’t want to do this without the sanction of the whole church. We had a few meetings and me personally, I was hoping they were going to shoot it down.” This participant’s son, who already had his own family, was excited by the move and had encouraged Farmer E to move as well. Given the level of responsibility that many of the participants discussed, Farmer E was motivated to move with his wife to support his son but would have been quite content remaining in southern Ontario.

Maintaining their culture and traditional lifestyle was a primary motivation for every participant. Many commented on the challenges of buying farmland in southern Ontario and the pressure associated with modernizing agriculture in close proximity to their farms. Farmer B stated, “in southern Ontario, with expensive land and expensive homes, more income is needed, which makes a bigger debt. To get more done, to make more money, you need to be more modern and it’s more stress. This is harder on your family life and you become depressed.” Moving to northern Ontario was viewed as an escape from the modernizing pressures of southern Ontario, where their lifestyle could be maintained. For many participants, the movement of their relatives provided the greatest source of motivation. In moving with other family members, the sense of community, culture and faith was easier to maintain.

4.3.3 Farming Operations

Diversification of agricultural operations was a core component of Old Order Mennonite farms in Massey. Every farmer interviewed had at least one diversified activity. Unlike the community in Black River-Matheson, the scale of diversification was
significantly smaller, as some farmers only diversified activities related directly to what was produced on the farm. Farmer E, for example, grew a variety of crops and raised different types of livestock but his secondary business was related to grading eggs. Considering the number of laying hens (499 birds) under his control, other diversification activities were limited to the egg grading station, which is open to the community. It was noted by Farmer E that he also grades eggs for other farmers in the community and he sells surplus eggs for these farmers as well. It is worth noting that while age was not asked as part of this research, Farmer E was open about his advanced age and that he considered himself to be partially retired. While the scale of his poultry operation is consistent with his former farm in southern Ontario, he self-identified as a part-time farmer but joked that “the neighbours laugh at me because I do more now than they did before they retired.” This retirement status may have an impact on the scale of his operation and amount of diversification. Farmer D was in a similar situation, having moved to the north at a later age. Farmer D’s operations are limited to intensive tomato production in greenhouses on a much smaller parcel of land. As a secondary activity, Farmer D did note his active involvement in providing updates to the broader Anabaptist community through the publication the Anabaptist Forum.

The other farmers interviewed noted a variety of secondary businesses, with some related directly to agriculture, while others are broader in scope. For one participant, farming was becoming more of a part time endeavour as his farm equipment and small engine repair shop kept him quite busy. Non-Mennonite farmers spoke favourably of the equipment repair shop and the important need this service had filled,
as they routinely utilized the shop for their own equipment. Farmer C was encouraged
to move by his brother who had already moved to the area and recognized the need for
someone to repair machinery. It was the identification of a need that brought Farmer C
to the north and given the nature of agriculture, this need would remain, “when you have
a farm, you have machinery. When you use machinery, you have breakdowns and they
need a place to get fixed. I know how to keep the machinery running but I still feel a bit
green on that.” With no formal repair or mechanic education, Farmer C learnt through
experience and has become the resident farm mechanic within the Old Order
Mennonite community and broader town. Indeed, his business has been successful,
which was viewed as a blessing and a curse, “non-Mennonites are always coming to my
shop. Word gets around. They heard I had a shop, came to see what it looked like and if
I could fix things. It just got from bad to worse.” While the last statement was made in
jest, maintaining a busy repair shop while also operating a farm is difficult.

Farmer F spoke openly about the importance of diversification within his
community and linked their viability to diversity of skill and production,

To a certain degree, our resilience is diversification. When we move to a new
community, we need farmers, but we also need other services. We need
someone who knows something about carpentry, if you have no one with that
skill, you have a problem. Where we came from, we were so used to having
everything at the tips of our fingers in our community. If there was a need, it
just got done. It doesn't happen like that here, so we need to have people with
a lot of skills to offer.

While other farmers spoke of the importance of diversification, Farmer F was the only
one to make the link between moving to the north and the necessity of diversification for
community success. Farmer A, however, did comment on the difficulty of operating a
farm and a secondary business but noted his determination was a driving force to succeed, “I just roll up my sleeves and get the job done.” Such thinking is foundational within the Mennonite culture and while non-Mennonite farmers noted the value of diversification and secondary businesses, they lacked the labour necessary for such endeavours.

An interesting aspect of diversification for Farmer F was his partnership with a non-Mennonite farmer to create a community store and CSA program. When Farmer F first wanted to set up the store, he was seeking a partner within his own community, however no one was interested. Shortly after purchasing the site for his store, a non-Mennonite from the town offered to partner with Farmer F and manage the marketing, logistical details and any other tasks required. Through this partnership, contracts were arranged in Sudbury for the sale of eggs and recently, the sale of meat at the Sudbury farmers’ market. Farmer F’s partner also organized a CSA program, which delivers fresh produce, eggs, baked goods and meat to Sudbury. In terms of scale, the sales are remarkably high, “we go through 600 dozen eggs per week… [and] we’re sitting at about 140 CSAs per week.” This endeavour was made possible through the partnership with a non-Mennonite and has been a successful diversification strategy that Farmer F manages but the rest of the community benefits from it.

One final example demonstrating ingenuity and the fulfillment of a need is the local abattoir. Farmer A started the abattoir in order to control costs of processing his livestock, as he had a similar business in southern Ontario. What is unique about his situation is a partnership established with a hotel in Sault Ste. Marie, that wanted
products free of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO). As a result of this, Farmer A changed his own farm setup and required that every animal processed in the abattoir be fed a GMO free diet as well. This partnership has been positive and in producing GMO free meat, a new market has been identified and diversified type of product available from this community. The diversity of products and services supports the viability of both the farms and the Old Order Mennonite community. Stated simply by Farmer D, “farming in general is hard but it’s even harder in the north. When you’ve been growing food all of your life, you don’t stop, you just find a different way to do it.”

4.3.4 Community Interactions

The topic of community arose during discussions of cultural identity and the support from the local community. Cultural identity was important to every farmer interviewed and they stressed the value of maintaining the traditional way of life and strengthening their spiritual values. There was a sense from participants that southern Ontario was eroding the lifestyle of Old Order Mennonites and that they could better maintain their lifestyle and religious values in the north. “Eventually, you have a family of your own and there are few things that become more obvious – one is that our lifestyle makes a difference to future generations” (Farmer B). The importance of lifestyle and its impact on future generations motivated many of the farmers to move to northern Ontario, but it also was the foundation of their success in Massey. Conversations with the local mayor, the representative from OMAFRA and non-Mennonite farmers echoed the importance of their unique community foundation as part of their success. The traditional values, such as hard work, supporting other community members and a
strong sense of religious conviction, provided the motivation to continue, even when challenges abounded. Farmer E spoke at length about the importance of faith stating, “all I can say is it is the Lord’s blessing to move into the area. The Lord has blessed us to make the sacrifice out of the rich soil and be satisfied to labour away with more results now than when we first arrived.” These feelings were also shared by Farmer D who commented on the need to be patient with agriculture, “being willing to postpone instant gratification for the longer term good is one of the things that makes a farming start up possible. Fewer of our young people realize that.” Such determination, hard work and patience is foundational within their cultural beliefs.

While the Old Order Mennonites have found success within Massey, this success was complicated by expectations of the local population. In particular, there was a sense that with the influx of Old Order Mennonites, the quality and availability of products would increase, and a farmers’ market would be established. For some of the participants, directly selling their products to local residents was expected but not everyone shared this sentiment. Farmer B found the expectation from locals to whom he would be selling his produce was challenging at first, “we had no intention of selling vegetables when we started but people saw our garden and wanted to know if we would sell. So, we built a road-side stand this year and everything is sold out by noon. Keeping up with demand is hard.” For Farmer E, dealing with consumer preferences was also a challenge when selling meat, commenting that “people know the cuts they wanted and that was all that sold. Then we were left with whatever and we always needed more steaks but all we had left were roasts.” Farmer A also noted the interesting aspects of
selling to a population that is not familiar with agriculture and their expectations of what a farm looks like, “I didn’t want to keep the animals close to the abattoir, but people drive out here and they expect to see a cow or a pig. I didn’t really understand it, but people like to see the animals and it helps to sell the product, so I make a point of having them nearby.”

It is important to note that the abattoir was also a source of contention for some local residents who did not want that use in close proximity to their land. “My neighbours weren’t happy with my application. It seemed like city folks were against it. The decision went all the way to the OMB and I didn’t really understand why that was necessary.” According to the OMAFRA representative, it was a small proportion of neighbours that did not want the abattoir constructed due to odour concerns. The mayor confirmed these facts stating, “three people had concerns and the appeal cost the municipality $30,000 but it’s been a real asset. There’s no smell at all but people got excited because it was something different. Some people don’t want to change, even if it’s for the best.” For Farmer A, this was part of the process and his determination to carry on and provide a necessary service to the community made facing the conflict worthwhile. Farmer D was blunter in his assessment of the abattoir conflict stating, “people are people and there are always one or two people opposed to new things but that has nothing to do with northern Ontario or Mennonites. You couldn’t start an abattoir anywhere in Ontario without opposition!” As Farmer A worked in an abattoir in southern Ontario, provincial regulations for abattoirs did not hinder the process and the only complication experienced was related to local community opposition.
One final aspect regarding expectations of the local community is related to the role many locals believed the Mennonites would fulfill. These expectations focused on the creation of a farmers’ market, a prospect that excited the local population.

When the Mennonites started moving into this area, for some people, in an area where there are no Mennonites, general society sometimes gets it into their heads that Mennonites and farmers’ markets go together…as soon as the local township knew we were moving, they assumed we would create a farmers’ market (Farmer F).

Within five years of moving to the north, the local town council held a town meeting about the establishment of a farmers’ market. According to participants, the town’s suggested model had many restrictions regarding what could be sold, and they were not supportive of the political influence on the market structure. At the time, Farmer F was considering the creation of a community store and his business partner suggested they combine the store with a farmers’ market. The farmers’ market, was not, however, meant to be and two years after it began, it ended. The challenge, according to Farmer F, was guaranteeing fresh produce was available during the week, as well as on market day and conflicts regarding what should be sold became too great. “After two years, I said ‘that was enough’. It was getting to the point where there was too much friction and I knew there were going to be some relationship problems if I didn’t stop the market” (Farmer F). Meeting the expectations of the local population, while balancing individual interests is complicated and Farmer F was convinced that in order to maintain a strong sense of community amongst the Mennonite population, running the store and purchasing products at wholesale prices was better than a farmers’ market. The fresh
produce is still available to the broader community; however, the structure of the system is slightly different.

Finally, many of the farmers commented on the positive relationship they have with the broader community but that the high expectations they have of Mennonites is hard to manage. Farmer F stated emphatically,

I know that people assume Mennonites are high quality and that puts a lot of responsibility on a guy like me to not ruin that and keep that assumption going. I’ve had a few interviews with people and I shy away from using Mennonite or Amish when talking about my product. In my mind, it’s not just good quality because it’s Mennonite. If someone wants to use my Mennonite name as a marketing tool, I don’t agree with that.

This sentiment is interesting, considering the high-quality expectations of the local population is the reason they initially and quickly had a consumer base. Personal-cultural conflicts appear to be related to the belief among Mennonites that boasting is a sin and marketing themselves as high quality or marketing the Mennonite image would be considered boasting. The OMAFRA representative also spoke about the attachment of quality to the term Mennonite, “it is possible for some, that the concept of the name Mennonite echoes quality. People know their quality and seek them out. There are signature products that are aligned with the term Mennonite and people want them.” It is complicated to understand how the community will work within this expectation of high quality, especially when it is an image they do not openly seek or advertise.

4.3.5 Future Opportunities

Many opportunities for future development and growth within the agricultural sector were identified by participants. It was noted that this community is significantly
smaller than the groups in Desbarats and Black River-Matheson, as they have grown at a slower rate. This was noted as positive by one participant, as the smaller community was considered a reflection of the community’s culture and desire to grow slowly, deliberately and sustainably. With that said, every participant noted the lack of services, such as construction workers and concrete finishers. While some members of the community have taken on these roles, it is not their speciality and not a service they want to maintain long-term. Attracting more members from the community in southern Ontario is necessary in order to continue evolving and growing in a manner that ensures the long-term viability of their settlement.

A second significant opportunity within the community is increasing the amount of fresh produce they are growing and diversify their crops. One farmer noted that market gardening was not something he intended to do but it arose out of community demand and as such, he has increasingly focused on this type of agriculture. Given the demand for products and partnerships that include Sudbury, Elliot Lake, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay, increased agricultural production would likely do well.

The climate issues identified in the two other case studies are not as pronounced in Massey. There have been no issues growing corn for sileage and as Farmer B exclaimed, “it’s always knee high by the 1st of July!” While sileage corn is not intended for human consumption, other fruits and vegetables that take longer to grow would be grown successfully in the Massey area. There is already a high level of support and appreciation within the Massey area for the fresh produce being grown by the Old Order Mennonites, which was noted by the mayor, “we often take fresh food for granted and at
one point, we certainly did in the north but as the old guys got older and stopped farming, we lost out. The Mennonites are reminding us how lucky we are”. As the northern climate is not a concern to this community and community support is high, they have the opportunity to try new techniques and new products. As noted by Farmer E, there is a lot of advantage to be up here. I love experimenting with crops, land and animals, anything like that. There is a lot more privilege up here to make mistakes than down south. Down south, it’s a million-dollar mistake. Up here? Not so. It’s a slower pace of life. I still have to work to make a living, but I can try different things and not be concerned if one piece didn’t work.

Considering the reduced financial pressure to make every opportunity a success, continuing to diversify and innovate appears to be a more viable opportunity.

4.3.6 Lingering Challenges

There are three significant challenges that may impact the long-term viability of this community: increased costs, lack of local agricultural knowledge and limited growth.

The costs associated with agriculture in northern Ontario were identified as higher in Massey than they were in southern Ontario. Of particular concern were shipping, supply and equipment costs. As most things need to be shipped from southern Ontario and the community has not established a retail store, there is an added cost. Further, it was noted by Farmer B that lack of competition was another reason for increased costs because, “back home, there’s lots of competition, and your products need to be a reasonable price or someone will outsell you. Up here, there’s no competition so price quoted is your only option.” Given the limited margins of profit for most small-scale farmers, high costs for inputs is a significant concern. Every participant noted their efforts to purchase products from their community in southern Ontario if it meant a cost
savings. The challenge with this approach is that they risk being viewed as not contributing to their local community, a point that was noted by non-Mennonite farmers.

The second challenge is lack of expert local knowledge related to the agricultural sector. Many participants commented on the complexity of the building permit process in Massey, especially when compared to their experiences in southern Ontario. According to Farmer F, “because there was hardly any agriculture in this area, one thing with this township is that it doesn’t understand cooperating with agricultural needs. To get a building permit here is very expensive and they keep finding issues. Back home it was bang bang bang because a barn is a barn.” Farmer F also commented on challenges with banks in the area as they did not understand the risk associated with farming. He stated, “to find a banker that understands how much it costs to get going is hard. I wanted to buy 200 cows for $300,000 and the banker said, ‘but they could die!’, meaning I may lose it all and he can’t get paid. Well, yeah, they could, but that’s not my goal! They just don’t understand.” Farmer F was the newest farmer to Massey that participated in this project and his challenges are more recent than others in the community. It should be noted that a private lending system is common within Old Order Mennonite communities and consists of individuals lending their own money via a promissory note; however, the community is still growing and it is unlikely that many families in Massey are in a strong financial position. As such, they rely on outside institutions for finances and the unfamiliarity of northern bankers with agriculture complicates the processes, frustrating farmers and increasing costs.
Finally, it was noted earlier that this community has grown at a slower rate than the other two communities. Massey, however, is only expected to sustain 40 families, while the other two communities have significantly more land available for future generations. It was noted by participants that they were seeking a lifestyle that was slower and not as hectic as southern Ontario and while they have found this in Massey, the town only has enough land to support 15 more families. Farmer D linked the risk of a rapidly growing population to over capitalizing and was honest about the future of the community stating, “I have no way of knowing if the migration will continue. We’ve started a community in PEI, which I certainly would not have foreseen. Let’s just say I enjoy history but prophecy is not my suit.” Regardless, the community will need to assess their growth to avoid stagnation and decline once the land base has been consumed and the maximum number of families reached. As the Old Order Mennonite population has demonstrated, when land access challenges abound, new locations are sought.

4.3.7 Impacts of Scale

Similar to the other two case study sites, the Massey Old Order Mennonite community is impacted by a variety of actors operating at different scales. At the individual farm level, decisions are made regarding the farming enterprise, diversification strategies and sideline businesses. These decisions are also impacted by the broader Old Order Mennonite community, which benefits from these farms but in some instances, also supports or influences individual actions. This was apparent with the creation of a local farmers’ market and ultimately, the community store, as the
broader Old Order Mennonite community supported both endeavours and provided products to be sold. Without the support of the Old Order Mennonite community, it is unlikely that the store, as it presently functions, would still exist. Individual farmers also benefit from the services offered by other Old Order Mennonites and impact the success of some of these businesses. Both the Old Order Mennonite community and broader Massey community benefit from Farmer C’s equipment repair shop and Farmer C, subsequently, has a successful sideline business. These individual farmers and individual community members create a mutually beneficial situation, given the services and products offered and readily purchased.

At the community level and beyond the support of consumers, the broader Massey community has impacted both the individual farmers and broader Old Order Mennonite community. Planning policies and other community regulations are generally supportive of the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle, use of land and additional businesses. According to the mayor, the local planning policies did not require any amendments for secondary businesses and the council was supportive of their meeting house and school building needs. As such, the Old Order Mennonites have not experienced any restrictions related to land use or farming activities.

At a provincial level, agricultural regulations impact the endeavours of the farming community but limitations to their businesses have not been experienced. Strong connections with the local OMAFRA representative have reduced complications regarding agricultural regulations and the community has adapted to northern Ontario. Partnerships, such as the local CSA program have resulted in linkages with other
northern communities and suppliers from southern Ontario and other northern locales. For example, some Mennonite farmers from Desbarats supply the community store and local CSA, as do some growers in southern Ontario. The communities in southern Ontario supply produce not available in the north, such as tender fruit and have expanded the availability of products for sale. These partnerships created broad scales of influence that impact the success of both the community store and CSA program; if produce was unavailable from one of these partners, the store, CSA program and consumers would be impacted.

4.3.8 Demonstration of Resilience?

Similar to the other two case studies, a number of hazards leave the community vulnerable and impact the adaptive capacity of both individual farmers and the Old Order Mennonite community. The largest influence on their adaptive ability is not a hazard or a vulnerability but a cultural connection. The Mennonite faith, value of community and cultural beliefs require individuals to consider the collective good. As a result, in times of hardship, there is an expectation of charity, which has not diminished in their move to the north. Farmer D was adamant that failure of the Mennonite community would not be the result of external forces, “I don’t think outward circumstances make or break a community. The challenges are usually from within. If a community has a feeling of failure or they can’t get along with each other, then we are doomed.” Farmer C also felt that their resilience was due to their community and that the greatest challenge for non-Mennonite farmers moving to the north is moving in isolation. Farmer B was more pragmatic and was aware of the challenge to maintain
that sense of charity and goodwill, “I would say community is key but it’s something that has to be constantly worked on, especially when we get busy. Right now, I’m selling all day but if someone’s house burns, what do I do? Do I help or do I pick vegetables? Sometimes it means burning the candle at both ends and the decision isn’t easy but we know when it’s right.” This recognition of the importance of building community and social capital reinforces the community’s adaptive capacity and through diversified farm activities, diverse skill set and determination, they have demonstrated a high level of resilience. The various hazards, vulnerabilities, impacts on adaptive capacity and resilience, are depicted in Figure 4.9.

![Figure 4.9: Applying the resilience framework to the Massey Old Order Mennonite community](image)

4.3.9 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the interviews conducted in three different case study sites. There are many similarities between Old Order Mennonite communities, with their religious convictions, community-centric approach and diversification practices common across all three groups. Differences in use of
technology, agricultural practices and population growth are evident but, through the application of the resilience framework, each community appears resilient. Some transformations and declines are identified but each community utilizes strong cultural beliefs and religious convictions to maintain the overall structure of the system.

Within the Desbarats area community, their complete avoidance of modern technology increased their vulnerability to a variety of hazards, as dependence on the local community and OMAFRA representatives for regulatory information and submission of government forms created a relationship of dependence. If either of the two individuals they heavily rely on are no longer in a position to assist, the entire system will be vulnerable and at risk of decline. While few Old Order Mennonite communities in Ontario have declined, two examples of community closures exist within southern Ontario: Teeswater, which existed from 1994-2000 and Dunnville, which existed from 1995-2000 (Draper, 2015). Both communities could not attract the necessary number of families to maintain a stable population and ultimately ceased. While Desbarats has steadily grown since the initial move in 2004, there are still risks of decline.

The community in Black River-Matheson has experienced incredible growth over their four years of existence with large acreages of farms purchased and areas cleared, and tile drained. This growth is impressive but based on the resilience framework, hazards associated with the rapidness of growth and lack of coordination are evident. The most obvious example of this hasty development is the building of a meeting place that is inaccessible to most members of the community and given its isolated location
will likely be sold. Further to this point, the community appears to have a number of ministers and church services occur in a variety of homes. This is inconsistent with other Old Order Mennonite communities, as religious services are typically held in one meeting place and attended by the entire community. Sunday is meant to be a day of rest and religious reflection and is an opportunity for the community to be united. While the Black River-Matheson community is still maintaining these practices, they do not occur in one place with a unified community. While this may be a minor detail, it is worth noting because it is not consistent with the other two case studies.

A second example of lack of coordination is the duplication of services. One participant noted that they are a seed retailer within the community but only after beginning their business did they realize that another Old Order Mennonite in the community is also a seed retailer. This lack of communication is potentially problematic and may result in wasted resources, limited social capital and a community lacking unity. Such inefficient development is uncharacteristic of Old Order Mennonites who are described by many as methodical thinkers with excessive planning before action is taken. The community is vulnerable to this rapid growth and unplanned or ineffective development. The geographic area of Black River-Matheson is vast and many of the community members are not in commuting distance. The store created by one community member has been quite successful but given the location, is not utilized by all members of the community. This fractured development and apparent lack of cohesive and inclusive planning may lead to factions in the community, thus reducing their social capital and strong community ties.
Lastly, the Old Order Mennonite community in Massey has also undergone transformation in the move to the north but have remained resilient. The community has grown steadily since 2006; however, significant limitations on land availability will eventually limit the growth of the Massey Old Order Mennonites. As with the other two communities there is a strong level of support from the broader population, but this support has brought high expectations of contributions from the Mennonite community and the community is left vulnerable. This was apparent with the desire for a farmers’ market and the eventual closure of the market after significant efforts were made by members of the Mennonite community. Balancing expectations of locals and the high attachment of value to their products while maintaining a cohesive community that remains true to their cultural beliefs and religious convictions may be difficult.

All three communities have demonstrated high levels of resilience through their use of diversified agricultural activities and sideline businesses. Table 4.5 provides a summary of the three case study sites, including population, timeline and agricultural endeavours. Their farms have proven multifunctional and while no Mennonite farmer would promote the Mennonite lifestyle for financial gain, there does appear to be a novelty attached to each community and a sizeable proportion of all sales, especially in the summer months, is related to tourists. Creating a spectacle to sell agricultural and non-agricultural goods would violate their religious and cultural convictions but this sense of novelty and uniqueness has benefited many farmers within these Old Order Mennonite communities. This sense of quality attached to the word Mennonite has not been promoted within these communities and this label is a manifestation created by
non-Mennonites. Regardless, the Old Order Mennonite community does strive to maintain a high level of quality and have contributed a variety of services, products and community development in each locale.
Table 4.5: Characteristics of Desbarats, Black River-Matheson and Massey Old Order Mennonite communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Desbarats</th>
<th>Black River-Matheson</th>
<th>Massey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Orthodox Old Order Mennonite</td>
<td>Old Order Mennonite</td>
<td>Old Order Mennonite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population¹</td>
<td>38 families (190 people)</td>
<td>30 families (150 people)</td>
<td>24 families (120 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Growth</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Slow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Horse and buggy</td>
<td>Horse and buggy</td>
<td>Horse and buggy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Equipment</td>
<td>Use horses for cropping</td>
<td>Use tractors for cropping</td>
<td>Use tractors for cropping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Technology</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Indoor plumbing, electricity, telephones</td>
<td>Indoor plumbing, electricity, telephones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Animals</td>
<td>Laying hens, poultry, beef cows, pigs</td>
<td>Laying hens, poultry, beef cows, pigs, dairy, buffalo, goats</td>
<td>Laying hens, poultry, beef cows, pigs, dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Crops</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Produce</td>
<td>Predominant</td>
<td>Market gardens</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-added Processing</td>
<td>Flour, canned goods, baked goods</td>
<td>Canned goods, baked goods</td>
<td>Canned goods, baked goods, cured meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Store</td>
<td>Yes, and produce auction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Abattoir</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ Market</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>External to community</td>
<td>External to community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Partnerships</td>
<td>Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Sudbury</td>
<td>Moosonee, local partner for CSA</td>
<td>Sudbury, local partner for CSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sideline Businesses</td>
<td>Road side stands, mill, carpentry and lumber</td>
<td>Road side stands, seed retailer, equipment retailer, carpentry and lumber, tile and tile drainage installation, small-scale greenhouse</td>
<td>Road side stands, carpentry and lumber, medium-scale greenhouses, equipment repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Availability</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1The total number of people is an estimate only
5 Discussion

“You have to understand that expectation and reality don’t always match. When you’re a farmer in southern Ontario, you have a certain expectation and often times, that is reality. Up here in the north, those two don’t seem to match all that often, especially when we first moved. We moved up here in April. We were coming from southern Ontario and left double digit weather. There was no snow on the ground, the grass was turning green and spring was in the air. We had planned to live in a camper while we built our house but when we got here, it was -24°C and everything was covered in snow. It was a shock to our system. How could we sleep in a camper that had no electricity and no heat? We didn’t have a backup plan. We knew it would be colder, we knew winter would be longer but it was mid-April and we weren’t prepared for winter. It was in that moment that I realized just how different life in the north was going to be.” – Farmer B, Black River-Matheson

The previous chapter presented the findings of the three case studies in terms of their demonstration of resilience within a resilience framework. In order to fully address the research question, sub questions and objectives (included below and presented earlier in Chapter 1), a discussion of the appropriateness of the existing resilience framework when studying Old Order Mennonite communities is necessary.

Research Question and Sub Questions

- How do Old Order Mennonite communities demonstrate agricultural resilience in northern Ontario?
  - What is the role of diversification within their resilience and how does it contribute to the viability of their community?
  - Are there lessons to be learnt from the Old Order Mennonite community that non-Mennonite farmers can utilize for their own resilience in northern Ontario?

Research Objectives

- Assess the current level of agricultural development in northern Ontario, including which areas are undergoing expansion and if this expansion is attributed to an Old Order Mennonite migration
- Identify communities that have experienced an influx of Old Order Mennonites and determine the motivations for farmers to start farming in northern Ontario
- Identify the challenges impacting Old Order Mennonites, the strategies they have utilized to adapt to these challenges and how these strategies demonstrate their resilience
• Analyze the results of the previous objectives in order to identify appropriate strategies that can be utilized by non-Mennonite farmers in northern Ontario.

Considering the research question, sub questions and objectives, this chapter will analyze the appropriateness of the existing resilience framework and propose an alternate interpretation of resilience that is more appropriate based on the findings presented above. The movement of farmers from southern Ontario is not limited to Old Order Mennonites but their adaptive capacity and strategies to achieve resilience may not be transferrable. Lessons from the Old Order Mennonite community will be presented and their applicability to non-Mennonite farmers in northern Ontario will be discussed, thus meeting the objectives of this research study.

5.1 The Limitations of Resilience

The resilience framework presented in this research and applied to the three case studies has a number of limitations that must be addressed and fully understood. Based on the framework presented, transformations and decline were considered separate from resilience. It can be argued, however, that transformation and decline are a necessary part of a resilient system and that each can contribute to overall resilience. According to Folke et al. (2010), deliberate transformation is part of resilience and transformation at smaller scale enables resilience at larger scales. Further, decline in one part of a system may reduce vulnerabilities, improve adaptive capacity and enhance resilience. The existing framework considered resilience, transformation and decline as binary terms that cannot evolve together. Evolution is a key component within dynamic systems and reflects a system’s ability to adapt to stress in a variety of
ways. Maintaining the same system structure may not always be the most desirable outcome for a system and that maintenance may actually be stagnation, not resilience. The assumption that systems are static is a failure in applying the resilience framework within the social sciences.

Social systems are continuously impacted by communities, relationships and scales that operate within feedback loops, constantly forcing a system to adapt. While the structure of the system may remain the same, for example, a farm remains a farm, the actual components within the system may change drastically. Continuing with the farm example, within a farm system, the type of produce grown, points of sale, chemical inputs and legislative framework, among others, may change regularly and dramatically. Some of these components may decline and others may transform completely while the system continues as a farm. These transformations and periods of decline must be considered as part of a resilient system and not separate from it. While it is true that overall system decline may lead to a system's failure, it may also result in a complete transformation. Furthermore, decline in one component of a system may reduce vulnerabilities or increase the overall adaptive capacity of the system, thus contributing to resilience. The same can be considered for transformation; as components of the system transform, they may reduce vulnerabilities or increase adaptive capacity, thus enhancing resilience.

It appears, then, that the original conceptualization presented in Figure 2.3 and definition of resilience within social systems is inadequate, given its failure to include transformations and decline as components that can contribute to resilience.
Considering the critiques of traditional resilience theory and need for additional research, this researcher proposes *dynamic social resilience* as a more appropriate term. Dynamic social resilience acknowledges that a system is not static and also provides the opportunity for transformation and decline within a resilient system; some components of the system may adapt while others fully change. Further, social resilience demonstrates the human component within social systems and the importance of human agency within a resilience framework. A conceptualization of dynamic social resilience, including the hypothesized role of risks, adaptive capacity and vulnerability is depicted in Figure 5.1. In order to fully understand the value or applicability of this resilience framework, it needs to be applied to the three case studies. In the section that follows, the conceptualization of resilience within each of the Old Order Mennonite communities is recreated with a variety of examples to understand how instances of transformation and decline contribute to resilience.

![Figure 5.1: Reconceptualized resilience framework recognizing the role of decline, adaptation and transformation (Epp, 2018)]
5.1.1 Applying the Dynamic Resilience Framework

Within the Desbarats Orthodox Old Order Mennonite community, a number of instances of decline, adaptation and transformation were identified. These aspects operated at a variety of scales and were influenced by a number of relationships. The initial conception did not recognize that decline and transformation impact and enhance a system’s resilience. For example, within the community, the community store was negatively impacted by the establishment of the produce auction. The majority of community store members gave up their membership in order to become an investor in the produce auction and sell their products through an auction format. As a result, the community store experienced significant decline as the store was left with five shareholders supplying their products. The decline of the community store was a result of the community’s decision to sell produce in an alternate format, so a transformation occurred. While the community store was certainly vulnerable as part of this new transformation, it underwent a transformation as well, seeking partnership opportunities and alternate outlets for its products. These partnerships strengthened this aspect of the system and contributed to individual resilience for each shareholder, the Old Order Mennonite community and the broader community of Desbarats. A diagram of this resilience framework is provided in Figure 5.2.
When applying this framework to Black River-Matheson, an interesting path to explore is the impact of rapid growth within a dynamic resilience model. This community has grown rapidly since their five families arrived in 2013 but this growth has come with challenges. In particular, the community does not appear to have the same structured growth pattern and planning involved in development. Duplication of services offered has occurred and limited coordination with transportation has resulted in high costs on an individual basis. Lack of communication appears to be a large component of these challenges, but they stem from a desire to grow rapidly. As is evident in the model presented in Figure 5.3, this rapid population growth can be viewed as a vulnerability that may reduce the adaptive capacity of the community and cause decline as resources are duplicated and costs are high.

Figure 5.2: An example of resilience including decline and transformation within Desbarats
Alternately, this rapid growth may also increase adaptive capacity as services have been generated quickly, partnerships are being formed and a stable consumer base with high demand for products has been established. As such, many transformations have occurred and some declines as well. While, independently, these are unlikely to impact the long-term resilience of this community, they are an immediate issue that leaves the community quite vulnerable. Over time, this vulnerability may decrease as population growth slows, collaboration is improved and a clearer structure for personal, cultural and professional development is established. A cultural system in particular is critical, given the value attached to the Old Order Mennonite identity and their original motivations for moving. The misstep associated with the hasty construction of a meeting place that will not be utilized demonstrates the value attached to their cultural and religious beliefs but also the inadequate planning that went into its construction.
This framework can also be applied to the Old Order Mennonite community in Massey and is depicted in Figure 5.4. This community is unique from Desbarats and Black River-Matheson as land availability is constrained, with an anticipated threshold of 40 families. It will be interesting to understand the potential impacts these limitations to growth will have on the long-term resilience of the community. As the community ages, there is potential for stagnation and eventual decline as farmland is no longer available and agricultural opportunities for future generations are limited. While this is a risk in southern Ontario, land constraints have resulted in greater diversification of community businesses and, in some instances, Old Order Mennonites with no farming operations. For these individuals, they do not intend to farm, so access to land is not as important. For the Massey community, the motivation to move to the north was to maintain an agricultural lifestyle and this lifestyle is dependent on access to land. This community moved from southern Ontario with an awareness of land availability limitations and the potential impacts it may have on their community. One farmer noted that this community

![Figure 5.4: An example of resilience including decline and transformation in Massey](image-url)

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would never be to the scale of the Black River-Matheson community, which was their goal.

While land availability increases their vulnerability, their adaptive capacity is high, as they have grown more slowly than the other two communities and at a rate that is more appropriate to their locale. Further, this knowledge has impacted the types of services offered, the areas of diversification and a strong sense of unity within the community. It has also resulted in greater contact with the broader Massey community, as many of the services they offer are utilized by non-Mennonites. As a result, social capital is high, their development and growth are methodical and well planned, and resources do not appear to be wasted. The OMAFRA representative for this area commented on their apparent resilience noting, “they are so orderly in the skill sets they develop across the families. From high end carpenters to engineering expertise for building, to sourcing materials. Part of this is the nature of the community and their orderly allocation of responsibility. Everything they do is in an orderly manner.” In some respects, the community appears to be master planned, as community discussions before the move and logical assessment of needed skills demonstrates a high level of planning. While the Black River-Matheson community also put significant planning into their move, the allocation of duties and progression of the Massey community appears more orderly and systematic. In the long-term, land limitations may cause the community to decline but it is more likely that a significant transformation will occur, and a new settlement will be planned.
The impacts of decline and transformation on resilience are interesting. In the example provided above, both aspects enhanced resilience. The initial move of the three groups of Old Order Mennonites can be viewed as a transformation within their social system in southern Ontario. This transformation enhanced the resilience of their former community as it provided additional land resources for community members that remained and also provided a new area for expansion. During the initial years of the move, each community was highly vulnerable and relied heavily on their networks in southern Ontario. This was most evident during the first few years of the move when family and friends from southern Ontario travelled to the north to offer assistance. For some of the new families, no buildings existed on the land they purchased and without the help from southern Ontario, construction would have taken significantly longer. Building supplies and labourers arrived from the south and remained until the most challenging aspects of construction were completed. Given the lack of services available in the north, this help was viewed as a necessity and crucial to the establishment of each community. Every participant commented on the assistance they received from southern Ontario and it is important to acknowledge their vulnerability during this time. Further, their adaptive capacity was also limited due to their move, lack of infrastructure and fledgling farming endeavours. It is also important to note that for the families in southern Ontario that assisted with the move, their adaptive capacity was also impacted and their own farm or home community was vulnerable during these same periods. These transformations both at the community and farm level were common throughout all three case studies and were not limited to the migration. They
were also apparent through the establishment of new farms, diversification strategies, sideline businesses and consumer bases. These transformations significantly enhanced the resilience of individuals, the Old Order Mennonite community and the broader town.

One of the most important aspects of resilience within these three case studies was the value attached to their culture and religious convictions. Every participant discussed the importance of their faith and how this core belief system influenced their move and motivated them to persevere. These beliefs provided initial structure, guidance and faith, which psychological research into resilience has demonstrated to be an important aspect of personal resilience (Greene, Galambos and Lee, 2003). The religious and cultural beliefs of Old Order Mennonites encourage a lifestyle that is not solely focused on monetary accumulation. There is a recognition and understanding of the importance of a strong business model, value of product and generating a profit but the social aspect of their lifestyle is also prominent. The religious and cultural beliefs of Old Order Mennonites results in shared experiences and sense of kinship that is foundational for community building. This kinship has the potential to enhance social capital and balance the communities as they establish and grow. This is important as the families in each community came from different parts of southern Ontario and did not necessarily know one another when they moved. While their lifestyles have been critiqued and some may consider their approaches antiquated, they are open about their beliefs and have been successful in their endeavours. The question remains, however: can non-Mennonite farmers, new to northern Ontario, create a resilient farm system and learn from the experiences of Old Order Mennonites?
5.1.2 Resilient Mennonites or Resilient Farmers?

The resilience of the three communities presented in this research are quite diverse in terms of their approaches, experiences, and successes; however, in each case study, there appears to be a viable future for the Old Order Mennonite farmers and their communities. The migration of farmers to northern Ontario is not limited only to the Old Order Mennonites as many non-Mennonites have moved to the north in an effort to farm. This migration of new, non-Mennonite farmers was discussed in interviews with OMAFRA and representatives of other agricultural organizations and was largely attributed to relatively cheap farmland and provincial funding to support farmers. Non-Mennonite farmers interviewed as part of this research were generally considered new farmers as they had farmed in the north for less than 10 years and in many cases, less than five years. While no data regarding the exact number of new farmers in northern Ontario is available, interviews with OMAFRA staff support anecdotal information in northern media regarding the migration of non-Mennonite farmers to northern Ontario (Arnason, 2017; McGrath, 2017; White, 2017). Furthermore, the provincial government’s commitment to funding for new beef farms within the Clay Belt (Beef Farmers of Ontario, 2018), the potential for Crown land to be released for public purchase (McGrath, 2017) and additional funding available from the Federal government (FedNor, 2017), it is anticipated that northern Ontario will continue to attract new farmers.

While the Old Order Mennonites have demonstrated resilience in their agricultural operations and long-term viability of their farms is anticipated, a reflection of
the Old Order Mennonites success and potential for widespread resilience amongst other farmers, particularly new farmers in northern Ontario, is necessary. Throughout this study, new farmers in northern Ontario that were not Mennonite also participated in interviews and their insights, where appropriate, have been incorporated in the findings section. There are three broad lessons that can be taken from the resilience of the Old Order Mennonites and incorporated into non-Mennonite farming communities: the importance of partnerships, the value of social capital and strong community support and lastly, the need to embrace diversification.

5.1.2.1 Importance of Partnerships

Partnerships have become a necessity within the Old Order Mennonite community, especially in terms of access to information and assistance with technology. While it is unlikely that non-Mennonite farmers require the same level of partnership for those aspects, partnerships for business ventures is imperative. These partnerships have been formalized, such as creating a farmers’ market in a First Nations community, supplying food vendors in Thunder Bay or co-owning a community store. These examples reflect the importance of identifying a consumer market and working with a variety of people to guarantee that food gets delivered and payment is received. Farmers are dependent upon consumers as their primary source of income and while consumer markets may vary in scale, identifying markets and being open to partnering with diverse people has strengthened the resilience of each of the three case studies. Informal partnerships were also common and included the sharing of equipment,
supplies and when necessary, labour. These informal partnerships could be viewed as more valuable, as they often arose during times of difficulty or need.

Such partnerships may not be as prolific in the non-Mennonite community. The movement of non-Mennonite farmers has been at a considerably lower scale and their impact on the communities they move to is not as pronounced. These farmers, they lack the novelty attached to Mennonites and the curiosity accompanying their sudden presence. This curiosity piques individual and community interest and often serve as a prompt for communication attempts and in some instances, partnerships. Non-Mennonite migrants must be as impactful without the novelty of appearances. Their strength will be in recognizing the importance of reworking old farmland and the economic impacts they have on their local community.

Informal partnerships are also challenging, given the geographic distance and low population density. Non-Mennonite farmers do not actively seek out communal farming arrangements and, for some, isolation is the only option. Sharing equipment, labour and knowledge become more complicated through individual moves. As Farmer C from Massey noted, “I believe that what we did was as a community and I can see where that is a big advantage than going on your own. There’s people all around but to you, they’re just strangers.” Establishing a knowledge network with local farmers and a sense of camaraderie is important, as these are foundational to many partnerships the Old Order Mennonites formed and it does not have to be a unique characteristic of Mennonites.
Informal partnerships can also be viewed in terms of growth within the agricultural sector and how such growth will impact the availability of equipment, supplies and services. The participants in the case studies often noted the challenges associated with a small agricultural sector that lacks the robustness of southern Ontario. As the agricultural sector grows, a critical threshold will be reached and access to equipment, supplies and services will improve. With this improved access, it is anticipated that costs will also decrease as competition will be improved and the need for shipments from southern Ontario will decrease. The community in Black River-Matheson enjoys some of these benefits given their proximity to Temiskaming Shores, a well-developed agricultural community a two-hour drive to the east. Some equipment and supplies were purchased from Temiskaming Shores, thus reducing expenses, but distance to services, including skilled labour, remained an issue. As more farmers move to northern Ontario, access to services should improve and the costs should decrease. The migration of non-Mennonite farmers may encourage the growth and expansion of some agricultural communities, creating hubs of activities where services and suppliers are centralized and more easily accessible to northern farmers. Such partnerships between communities and general growth in the agricultural sector will become more robust through permanent migration.

This growth is, however, threatened by farmers from southern Ontario who purchase land in the north for cash cropping but do not move. These farmers travel to the north to plant and harvest but maintain their home base in southern Ontario, with equipment and labourers traveling from the south when needed. Such operations keep
farmland in production but offer little economic or social benefit to northern communities. Partnerships, both formal and informal, have the potential to benefit individual farmers, the farming community and local towns. A robust agricultural sector will be more resilient through permanent migration as the Old Order Mennonites have demonstrated the necessity and foundational strength associated with a committed population. New farmers that migrate permanently to northern Ontario can establish formal and informal partnerships and, through such endeavours, contribute to the local community and build a more robust agricultural sector.

5.1.2.2 Value of Social Capital and Community Support

Social capital is a critical component of resilience and impacts many aspects of the resilience framework. At the most basic level, social capital impacts a community’s or individual’s adaptive capacity, as it provides a support network. Foundational to social capital is trust and the Old Order Mennonites have worked hard to maintain high levels of social capital within their community and the broader town. This was evident through their acknowledgment of charity and needing to assist a community member in need. Non-Mennonite farmers do not move with a community and, as a result, lack the social capital common amongst the Old Order Mennonites. As a result, they have to work harder to establish networks, a sense of community and relationships. Of particular importance is bonding social capital, which is established within groups that share traits, commonalities and characteristics. Building relationships within an existing agricultural community is imperative but these communities may not operate at the same scale as the Old Order Mennonite community. Further, these communities may
lack new farmers or other farmers that understand the challenges new farmers face when moving to the north. Regardless, a sense of camaraderie may be evident in any agricultural community and seeking out these communities may offer insights into local knowledge, skills and expertise.

Bridging social capital will also be important as linkages beyond the agricultural realm will be beneficial. These may include the broader rural community and the business sector, among others. It will be important to establish social capital beyond the agricultural realm, which may develop social or cultural connections to the north. Many social barriers exist in northern Ontario including limited services and lower population density, which may negatively impact an individual’s well-being and make the transition to northern Ontario more complicated. As the Old Order Mennonites move with a community and nurture their social relationships, bridging social capital will be important for non-Mennonite farmers to create an attachment to the north and establish a positive sense of place.

5.1.2.3 Embracing Diversification

Finally, diversification has proven critical to the resilience of Old Order Mennonite farms. The variety of crops, livestock, farm-related activities and non-farm services reduce vulnerabilities and spread economic risk. Every Old Order Mennonite participant noted diversified farm activities and at least one secondary business operated on the farm. While this diversification is imperative to their livelihoods, they also have a labour force within their household that provides assistance. Most participants had between five and ten children and as these children get older, their responsibilities within the
household increase. For non-Mennonite farmers, five to ten children per household is not common and the lack of workforce becomes a significant concern. While labour shortages are problematic, capital is often substituted for labour, resulting in additional expenses. Access to a labour force in northern Ontario is significantly more difficult given the geographic distance between households and lack of agricultural knowledge. Furthermore, hiring additional labourers would be an additional cost for non-Mennonite farmers, thus reducing profits and increasing the vulnerability of the farm.

The benefit for non-Mennonite farmers might be their greater usage of technology, which streamlines farm practices, improves efficiencies and may decrease the need of additional labour. The use of modern farm equipment is not free of expenses, but it could replace some labour needs. Logistical details, awareness of regulations and regulation changes and even market prices are all easier to access through online formats. This utilization of technology would make some aspects of agriculture less time consuming for non-Mennonite farmers and enable them to streamline their farm businesses. Technology is also beneficial in terms of identifying potential consumers, markets and advertising needs. This provides further opportunities to diversify not only the nature of the agricultural endeavour but also the consumer base. A diverse consumer base reduces risks and vulnerabilities and may provide some financial stability. While Old Order Mennonite farmers’ diversification strategies are enhanced by their internal workforce, opportunities exist for non-Mennonite farmers to diversify their farm businesses and utilize technology to improve efficiencies and reduce the need for additional labour.
5.1.3 Summary

It is clear that the dynamic social resilience model is more appropriate for research within the social sciences. Transformation and decline are integral components of the resilience framework and they may contribute to vulnerability or resilience. The literature provided in Chapter 2 demonstrates the value of resilience theory within the social sciences and reflected on the complexity of human beings, role of social relationships and importance of scale (Walker et al., 2004; Gallopín, 2006, Davidson, 2010). While resilience is considered a system's ability to adapt without changing its basic structure (Lyon, 2014), it can be argued that the Old Order Mennonites have transformed many aspects of their structure. Their move to northern Ontario reconfigured each community and the systems each farmer knew. These migrating communities required new leadership, support and business ventures. While the foundational Old Order Mennonite belief system remained, every other function within the system was transformed. Considering these transformations, the term dynamic social resilience is more appropriate given its recognition of the change within social systems.

As was stated in Chapter 2, resilience within social systems must explore the impacts of vision, leadership and trust, social networks, knowledge transfer and governance (Folke, 2003; Folke, 2006; Lebel et al., 2006; Buikstra et al., 2010; Brown and Westaway, 2011, Berkes and Ross, 2013). It is clear that the Old Order Mennonites had a strong vision guiding their migration to northern Ontario and trust amongst community members that the move would be beneficial. Their reliance on internal and
external community members built social capital, enabled knowledge transfer and provided insight into the governance impacting agriculture and their new locales. These aspects of social systems are not unique to Old Order Mennonites, but their high levels of social capital and innate sense of charity enable them to persevere both as individual farmers and as a community. New farmers to northern Ontario will benefit from strong social networks and high levels of social capital which should be established through trust and reciprocity.

In understanding how vulnerability, transformation, adaptive capacity and decline interact, a more holistic view of resilience can be gained. These concepts have been imperative to the success of the Old Order Mennonite communities, but these successes can be broadly applicable to all northern farmers. With a systems approach, all aspects must be considered as contributing in some way to the overall resilience of a system. Within the Old Order Mennonite communities, both decline and transformation has shaped their system and increased resilience. Much can be learnt from these communities and these lessons are applicable to other northern communities, as well as non-Mennonite farmers.
6 Conclusion

“There are a lot of naysayers out there who think we are crazy or don’t know what we’re doing or understand what we’ve gotten ourselves into. Those people just don’t understand. They think we’re going into the bush and hacking out a log cabin with our bare hands. That image may have been true for my grandparents or great grandparents but that isn’t current. When people think of the north they think there is no infrastructure, no roads, only forests. Well, yeah, maybe in some parts of the north that’s true, but there is so much up here already. What I see is lots of opportunity. Some of these towns may not have much agriculture or many businesses but that’s an opportunity for someone to take advantage of. That might be one of the greatest strengths of our community. When we see a need, we see it as an opportunity and we fill it and I think our community and the local population benefit from that kind of thinking.” – Farmer D, Massey

This study sought to understand the resilience of three communities of Old Order Mennonites in northern Ontario, the role of diversification within a resilience framework and lessons that could be applied to farmers in northern Ontario. The initial resilience framework did not include decline and transformation and viewed each characteristic as a threat to resilience. This conception was proven insufficient as transformation and decline were apparent in each community and it was argued that both features contributed to resilience. The dynamic social resilience framework provided a more appropriate understanding of the various components impacting social system resilience. The view of decline and transformation being separate from resilience is not an accurate reflection of resilience within Old Order Mennonite communities. Decline and transformation are central characteristics that contribute to the long-term resilience of each of the case studies and as such, must be considered as part of resilience. In many instances, decline in one area led to transformation in another, thus enhancing the resilience of the system. Further, decline of one component, such as the community
store in Desbarats as a result of the produce auction, resulted in a transformation of the community store through new partnerships. While the community store became vulnerable and it was possible that decline would continue, a transformation occurred through new partnerships and it became a strong feature within the community.

Given the transformation of agricultural structures, dynamic social resilience provides an appropriate foundation for resilience research. As transformation occurs when the nature of the system is changed, multifunctional family farms should be identified as a transformed type of agriculture. While the overarching agricultural system remains, the scales, inputs and relationships are drastically different within a multifunctional farm structure. Family farms adopting multifunctional attributes have experienced such transformations, as was apparent in the three case studies. While traditional resilience frameworks do not view transformation and decline as a defining characteristic of resilience, transformation is foundational to multifunctional agriculture as it was created out of decline within the productivist model.

Transformations are an integral component within the Old Order Mennonite farm system as community needs, ingenuity and a strong cultural and religious belief system guide the development of each community. Transformation can be deliberate and is often initiated at multiple scales (Folke et al., 2010). Within the Old Order Mennonite communities, transformation initially occurred when they moved to northern Ontario, as their community structure changed. This transformation was also experienced at the scale of individual farms as many farmers sought new agricultural endeavours. While some farmers transferred their agricultural operations to the north, such as the dairy
farmer in Black River-Matheson, many shifted the focus of their operations and engaged in diversified activities. This deliberate transformation was a necessity for survival as agriculture in northern Ontario was considered more challenging than in southern Ontario.

As noted by Folke et al. (2010), transformation includes novelty and innovation, two characteristics demonstrated by the three case studies. Novelty, it can be argued is attached to our understanding of Old Order Mennonites and the qualities, potentially stereotypical, that they encompass. It can also be found in the types of agriculture offered, as access to fresh, locally produced food was a novelty for many local residents. Innovation was also found throughout the three case studies and included diversification strategies, sideline businesses and external partnerships. Combined, these transformations contributed to the resilience of farmers, the Old Order Mennonite communities and broader rural locale. Resilience theory has traditionally focused on returning to an equilibrium, but social systems are dynamic and complex, resilient social systems must include the opportunity for transformation.

Significant planning was initiated by members of each community before this transformation occurred. Each community was scouted, researched, assessed for agricultural viability and an inventory of existing businesses was created. Through this planning, the necessary skillset of potential families was created so that when a move occurred, the most basic skills and services would be available. In many ways, these communities appear master planned, as the move did not occur without a clear understanding of the economic, environmental and social characteristics of each
community. A significant amount of resources, including financial and social capital, were necessary before the move was initiated. The planning that went into each new community is a testament to the resilience of Old Order Mennonites and their cautiously resourceful nature. As a cultural group that openly avoids modern conveniences, such planning is necessary for the group’s survival. It can be argued that the mere existence of Old Order Mennonites demonstrates, at a basic level, their resilience. The deliberate transformation orchestrated in a move to northern Ontario is a further attempt to maintain their culture. Without careful planning and resourcefulness, this move would not have been possible, or it may have resulted in the demise of each community and a move back to southern Ontario.

These transformations would not have been possible without both individual and collective adaptive capacity. At the individual farm level, the deliberate development of farm endeavours was the result of careful planning, analysis of resources and assessment of local needs. Each family brought unique skills to the north that benefited the Old Order Mennonite community and general population. These skills also permitted both the farms and community to grow and evolve as more families moved to the north. While these three communities are not isolated, the availability of skilled labour, commercial businesses and other services was quite limited and impacted the viability of many farms; however, at the start of each move additional support was provided by their respective communities in southern Ontario and as more families moved, the capacity of each northern community stabilized. As a result, reliance on Old Order Mennonites in southern Ontario declined and each case study site is becoming
increasingly self-reliant. Over time, as these communities continue to grow, their adaptive capacity will increase, and their resilience will be strengthened.

Beyond transformation and decline, an important aspect of resilience was diversification. Diversification strategies were utilized by every participant and was a central feature of each Old Order Mennonite community. While some farms appeared to be more productivist than multifunctional in nature (e.g. dairy farm), every farmer engaged in a sideline business that diversified their farm income. As such, it can be argued that the majority of farms were multifunctional and even those with a more productivist focus still maintained diversified activities for economic reasons. While diversification offered monetary benefits for each farm family, most of the participants engaged in diversified operations due to necessity and lack of local services. In each case study site, the Old Order Mennonite community created a variety of businesses missing from their town, which benefitted the broader population. Some businesses were focused on agriculture while other businesses, such as the community store and machine repair shop, were broader in scope. In each situation, both farmers and the broader community benefitted from the creation of a new business or service. While both the communities and Old Order Mennonites benefited from diversification, it was a necessary aspect of individual farm viability and survival of their broader community.

The resilience of the Old Order Mennonite communities can be attributed to their adaptive capacity, ability to transform and, in some instances, acceptance of decline. For the broader farming population, especially farmers in northern Ontario, much can be learnt from the successes of the Old Order Mennonites. Diversification and its linkages
with partnerships and social capital were integral in the resilience of Old Order Mennonites. Given the increased costs and distance to markets, agriculture does not appear as lucrative as in southern Ontario. As a result, diversified activities were critical. Support from the broader community was necessary for these businesses and through enhanced social capital, a variety of partnerships, both professional and personal, were established. Social capital and a strong sense of community are important facets of many rural locales and much research has explored their role within rural studies (Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000; Lee et al., 2005; Onxy, Edwards and Bullen, 2007; Phillips, 2016). For farmers in northern Ontario, community support and availability of social capital is increasingly more important and will contribute to farm viability. The rural community will also benefit from a strong agricultural sector and, as was noted in Chapter 2, rural and community are mutually dependent on one another and should not be considered separately.

The three Old Order Mennonite communities explored in this study have demonstrated their resilience through diversification, transformation and decline. Their strong cultural and religious beliefs have created a foundation for their community and a sense of unity within each migration. There is an expectation of support, generosity and charity as part of the Anabaptist religion and this expectation is demonstrated in everything they do and everywhere they go. These northern towns have benefitted from the Mennonite migration; however, these moves have not been without challenges and controversy. Through these issues, the resilience of both Old Order Mennonites and the northern locales have been challenged but through social capital and a strong
community bond, have persevered. The need to be innovative, diversified and determined is apparent but these qualities are not unique to the Old Order Mennonites. Farmers, it can be argued, have always been innovators and historically, have assisted in the transformation of the agricultural system. While a variety of scales and actors impact the viability of many agricultural endeavours, a willingness to transform and accept some aspects of decline may contribute to a more resilient northern agricultural system.

6.1 Research Implications

This research sought to examine the resilience of Old Order Mennonite farmers in northern Ontario. In doing so, an understanding of their motivations to move and their experiences as new farmers in northern Ontario were examined. Many challenges and opportunities were identified through this research, which are of value to the Old Order Mennonite community, non-Mennonite farmers, northern municipalities, agricultural organizations and other researchers.

For the Old Order Mennonite community, this research has provided a thorough assessment of their migration to northern Ontario and how their cultural and religious beliefs, agricultural skills and diversification strategies have contributed to the long-term viability of the three case study sites. It is anticipated that the migration of Old Order Mennonites to northern Ontario will continue and an understanding of the importance of transformation and possibility of decline will better inform new migrants to this community. It will also be beneficial for Old Order Mennonites that remain in southern Ontario, as the resilience of this community will be challenged by land availability and
the increasing value of farmland. In order to remain in southern Ontario and maintain their communities, alternative strategies must be sought, and it is likely that fewer Old Order Mennonites will retain farming as their full-time business. Many of the Old Order Mennonites that moved to the north did not see a strong future for agriculture in southern Ontario and for some, their primary business was no longer farming. The Old Order Mennonites that remain in southern Ontario will need to understand the challenges regarding the viability of their agricultural system and potential decline their community may face. The successes of these three case study sites serve as a lesson to the southern communities regarding resilience, determination and the strength of community.

For non-Mennonite farmers in northern Ontario and those interested in migrating to the north, agricultural resilience is threatened by climate, expenses, distance to markets and a variety of other factors. The resilience of the Old Order Mennonite communities is related to their diversified farming endeavours and reliance on strong community connections and social capital. It is unlikely that mon-Mennonite farmers migrating to northern Ontario will move with the same sense of community inherent within the Old Order Mennonite system. It will be important to understand the value of community and as more farmers move to the north, that the potential for a robust agricultural industry and strong community connections will increase. The support within the Old Order Mennonite community was imperative to their success during the first few years of their move and it will be important for non-Mennonite farmers to establish similar connections within their broader rural communities. The resilience of non-
Mennonite farmers is impacted by different challenges and opportunities, but their use of modern technology may limit some of the issues discussed above.

Many rural communities in northern Ontario are facing population decline, as outward youth migration contributes to an aging population. While agricultural opportunities are plentiful in the north, not every community is suitable for agriculture. Northern communities with an abundance of agricultural land should work to attract farmers to their areas, recognizing that one of their greatest strengths is the lower cost of land. Agriculture in southern Ontario is well-established but competing urban land uses and increasing farmland values have made farming unfeasible for many. While agricultural challenges are heightened in northern Ontario, opportunities for new farmers abound; however, northern communities need to understand both the real and perceived social, economic and environmental barriers that deter potential farmers from moving to the north. The Old Order Mennonites seek communities with abundant farmland and an agricultural system that is not well-developed. Community structure, including social and political systems do not impede the movement of Old Order Mennonites but they will likely impede potential non-Mennonite farmers. In understanding the challenges new farmers face, as well as the opportunities available in many northern communities, the migration of farmers from southern Ontario and beyond can be enhanced.

This research was significantly strengthened by support from OMAFRA staff in both northern and southern Ontario. The staff in northern Ontario have a keen understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that farmers face in northern
Ontario. While this research benefitted from the support of OMAFRA staff, they will also benefit from this study and research findings, as it provides a detailed assessment of one subsection of the farming community. Further, given the religious and cultural foundations of these communities, this research provides insight into their decision-making system, interactions with external agents and commitment to agricultural endeavours. The information presented in this research can assist both northern and southern OMAFRA staff working with Old Order Mennonites to further their understanding of community structure, economic opportunities and strategies to engage with this community in a culturally sensitive manner.

Working with Old Order Mennonites presents unique challenges, including special communication strategies and culturally sensitive interactions. This study has highlighted the importance of working with this non-conventional agricultural community and the value in understanding their experiences. For the research community interested in working with Anabaptist groups (e.g. Old Order Mennonites, Amish, etc.), gaining trust and building relationships must be a foundational component of any study. It is important to understand that while establishing relationships with community leaders is necessary, building both trust and support is time consuming. Participants need to be actively involved throughout the research project and have the opportunity to review all content. As the participants in this study are a minority cultural group, the research must be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to their beliefs and practices. Providing participants the opportunity to review transcripts and discuss findings strengthened our relationship and built trust into the research process and their
involvement in this study. Conducting research according to their schedule in a manner that was as minimally intrusive as possible, established a relationship of mutual respect. Finally, it was the experience of this researcher that gender dynamics did not impact the research process, quality of data or participation levels. Conducting research that is culturally sensitive and respectful proved more valuable than gender roles.

6.2 Future Research

There are opportunities for further research with each Old Order Mennonite community, in terms of agricultural endeavours, community expectations and future migration. This research could be broadened to include Old Order Mennonite communities in southern Ontario and assess their resilience with increasing land values and decreasing land availability. The movement of Old Order Mennonites to northern Ontario was motivated by a need to maintain their cultural and religious beliefs within a farming community. Considering these motivations, one may wonder about the future for Old Order Mennonite communities in southern Ontario and if they are facing decline and transformation like the three case study sites. Further, recent migrations to Prince Edward Island have occurred and this resilience framework could be applied to that community to understand their motivations to leave Ontario, considering the distance associated with that move.

This research focused on the farming and agricultural diversification activities of Old Order Mennonite families and communities. When conducting this research, participation from women within the community was sought, when appropriate; however, in exploring aspects of farm structure, women declined participation and
preferred that their husband participate. The exclusion of women from the Old Order Mennonite community was not done intentionally and was not meant to undermine their important contribution to agriculture, their household and broader community. In fact, many women within the Old Order Mennonite community maintain their own business endeavours and financial contributions to their household. Future research should explore the economic and social contributions of women within Old Order Mennonite communities and their impacts on household and community resilience. The social structure of Old Order Mennonite communities should also be explored in order to fully understand the role of gender, culture and religion within decision making, economic development and division of labour. It was the experience of this researcher that existing assumptions of Old Order Mennonite communities related to gender dynamics and interaction with female researchers were antiquated and research critically examining these topics would be beneficial.

Beyond the Old Order Mennonite community, future research exploring the motivations of non-Mennonite farmers to move to northern Ontario, as well as the challenges and opportunities they face, would be beneficial. The challenges associated with land availability and farmland values in southern Ontario impact all farmers and the migration to the north is not limited to the Old Order Mennonite community. As such, future research should focus on non-Mennonite farmers and identify the areas they are moving to, their motivations to move, challenges they face and ultimately, their resilience within this migration. Research should also explore the environmental impacts of agricultural expansion in northern Ontario and the profitability of these agricultural
endeavours. As the cost of farmland in southern Ontario increases and pressures related to urban growth and farmland availability intensify, agricultural opportunities in northern Ontario will attract many farmers. Additional research into the impacts of this migration on northern communities as well as the resilience of these migrating farmers will become increasingly important.

“There is a strong history of determination with both the Mennonites and northern folks. This determination is why both groups of people remain. I think we benefit from one another and I don’t think we will ever give up. I’ve been told I’m stubborn, but I like your word better… maybe I’m just resilient.”
– Farmer D, Massey
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX 1: FARMER INTERVIEW GUIDE

- How many years have you farmed at this site and can you tell me about your farm (e.g. type of farming activities, number of acres farmed (owned and rented), number of livestock, crop patterns, crop types, etc.)?
- Are there any improvements that you’ve made to your farm (e.g. drainage)?
- What was your motivation to begin farming in northern Ontario?
- If you’re not from the north, where did you move from?
- What has been your experience with farming in northern Ontario?
- What challenges, if any, have you experienced as a farmer in northern Ontario?
- What challenges exist with processing/distributing your goods?
- What processing facilities do you use for your produce/livestock?
- Do you have adequate access to roads, markets, labour supply, etc.
- Have you encountered any issues with municipal planning policies?
- Do you participate in any secondary on-farm activities (e.g. lumber, furniture, etc.)?
- In what ways do you think agriculture could be expanded in northern Ontario?
- What opportunities do you think exist for farmers in northern Ontario?
- In what ways has the community impacted your agricultural activities (e.g. supported through the purchase of food)?
- From what you know, are there any programs that exist to promote local food production? Do you participate in any of these programs?
- Do you feel the community supports agriculture and local food production?
- How effective have local food strategies been to support farmers?
- Do you see your children wanting to farm in the north?
APPENDIX 2: MUNICIPAL STAFF AND FARM ORGANIZATION INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Describe the agricultural industry in your municipality (e.g. growing, shrinking, etc.)
- In what ways does the municipality/farm organization support local food growers?
- Would you please describe the municipalities/farm organization’s role in local food production, processing and distribution?
- What considerations have been given to expand the farm industry in this community?
- What has been the community’s reaction to local food production?
- In what ways are local food producers promoted in this area?
- In what ways do planning policies impact the expansion of the agricultural industry?
- What programs exist to link food producers to processors and distributors?
- How would a local food network that links producers, processors and distributors within and between northern communities’ impact local food access in this community?
- What do you consider to be the role of the municipality/farm organization in food security? Local food production? Local food distribution?
- What changes would you recommend to existing policy to support the existing/expanding farm sector?