

**ECONOMIC DECLINE AND A RURAL MANITOBA VILLAGE:  
STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL**

By

**LYNN MARGARET LAWLESS**

A thesis presented to  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines several factors which are contributing to socio-economic decline in the rural Manitoba village of Elphinstone and its surrounding area. The local situation of decline is related to more general trends in the economy of Canadian grain agriculture. An argument is brought forward for the use of theoretical constructs which link micro and macro levels of analysis -- in particular, a conceptualization of capital in economic, cultural and social forms -- and the influence of ethnicity and culture in shaping economic behaviour and local stratification systems. Data collected through participant observation and formal case study interviews are presented to indicate the variation in social and economic strategies being employed in the local setting and to elaborate the local system. An examination of local strategies, in terms of levels of the various forms of capital they embody, is used to interpret the conflicts found to arise from the co-existence of kin-ordered and capitalist forms of production and the resulting ambiguous position of certain individuals in the local stratification system. The argument concludes with speculation as to the direction of change in the local system in light of current trends in the macro system.

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I alone take full responsibility for any errors contained in this thesis.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

In light of the high level of attention being given to the farming crisis in the popular media, relatively little scholarly research has been forthcoming concerning the state of rural areas most directly influenced by this crisis. Most of what we in anthropology know about Canadian agricultural communities comes from the works of John Bennett (1969) and Jean Burnet (1951). This thesis focuses on the community of Elphinstone, Manitoba in an attempt to begin rectifying the apparent knowledge gap. For the purposes of this thesis the community of Elphinstone refers to the two hundred and thirteen residents of the village of Elphinstone proper and the surrounding farming population of approximately the same size. At issue here are the strategies being employed by the people of Elphinstone in the face of the farming crisis and their implications for the future of the community. There are three interrelated processes which have contributed to economic decline in farming: the intensification of agriculture, the cost-price squeeze, and the centralization of capital and social services.

Intensification in agriculture, encouraged by lending institutions, elevator companies, and manufacturers of farm chemicals and machinery, has involved expanded land holdings and increases in the use of machinery and

petro-chemicals. Initially, this highly capital intensive approach had a positive impact despite the increased farm debt loads and decrease in both the farm population and the need for farm labour.

The cost-price squeeze, however, brought about by fluctuations in, and manipulation of, the world cereals market, has reversed the positive impact of intensification. Simply stated, the cost-price squeeze has resulted from a situation where costs of farm inputs have continually risen over the years, while international grain prices have dropped. This drop in grain prices has decreased the relative returns from farming, devalued farm land, and consequently impaired the farm operators' ability to borrow further capital from lending institutions. Of those farmers who incurred high debt loads in an effort to intensify production, many face bankruptcy. Thus, there are fewer people in the region making a living from agriculture and there is less disposable income for those who remain. As farming is the primary economic activity in this region, a decline in farming has led to an overall decrease in local economic activity.

The centralization of capital and social services are the direct result of decreased local economic activity and decreased population. As the local farming population has diminished and has spent increasingly less on goods and services in the village, local businesses have been forced to close or relocate. With these small businesses, jobs have also left the village and people have gone elsewhere to find employment. The decrease in population has increased the per capita costs of providing education, health, and welfare services locally. These services have been removed from the town and located in larger centres. The combined effect of lost employment and removal of locally provided government services from an

area can be viewed as a decline in the local standard of living, as Padfield (1980:177) has noted, contributing to the decision of even more people to move away from the village.

Socio-economic decline, then, refers to the process by which the local economy becomes depressed and stagnant, and the standard of living declines. In addition to this, there is the implication that this process is beyond the control of the local population. Despite their inability to stall or reverse the process of decline, those individual people and households that remain in the community of Elphinstone have generated various adaptive strategies in response to their changing situation.

These strategies are both economic and social in nature. On the surface they consist of combinations of income from different sources to support a household. Chronic conditions of underemployment and unemployment in this region produces heavy dependence on municipal, provincial, and federal income support and social programmes. Farmers have had to seek additional sources of income as well as adjust their farming practices and investment strategies to deal with fluctuating markets.

Diversity in the adaptive strategies being employed stems from an inequality in access to and ability to make use of available resources and economic opportunities among the major ethnic components of the local population. Although there exists at the local level an ideology of communality which demands equality and justice among neighbours, within the local system opportunities and advantages are differentially available to people based on the possession of certain economic or social characteristics. While objective economic factors such as demonstrable

wealth and position in the production process can result in advantages or disadvantages at the local level, such characteristics as level of education, occupation, ethnicity (cultural background), religion, or family affiliations are also significant. Bourdieu (1983 and 1984) as well as LiPuma and Meltzoff (1989) similarly have suggested that class can be analyzed in terms of the intersection of economic capital such as position in the process of production, cultural capital such as speech and manners, and social capital such as ancestry. The specific expression of each of these forms of capital will differ by locality or region. It will be the main contention of this thesis that the analysis of social stratification at the local level demands a broadened concept of class which includes not only universally relevant characteristics such as position in the production process, but also characteristics which are of variable importance such as ethnicity, religion, family affiliations or education. As far as the local social system remains the sphere of relevant social ties, the adaptive strategies employed by actors in the local setting are in some part the product of and response to the immediate local system as well as the regional and national economic and social systems in which it is embedded.

### **1.1 Development and Decline in Canadian Grain Agriculture**

From the beginning, the operation of capital has demanded the eventual decline of rural communities and like many small agricultural settlements across North America, economic instability has always characterized the history of the community of Elphinstone. The initial motivation for settlement on the prairies was the availability of abundant free land

beginning in the late 1800's and ending by 1920. Grants of 160 acres were available to all who filed claim and broke the land. An additional 'pre-emption' of 160 acres was also available at a cost of one dollar per acre. While many people came, stayed for a few years, then sold out for a profit, others came to settle, seeking land as a source of prosperity and economic independence. With these settlers came the small businessmen and entrepreneurs, as well, with similar notions of prosperity and independence. Villages sprang up across the prairie landscape.

Within the functioning of a capitalist system, however, the ability to protect and improve one's position depends on political and economic power, and this is held by big capital, not by small entrepreneurs and commodity producers. The independent agricultural producers and rural areas in general have always been under the sway of the railways, grain companies, large manufacturers, and banks; the attempts of these interests to maximize their own profits and control markets; and the concomitant pressures towards growth and capital centralization.

Transportation and the associated costs have always been a concern for prairie agricultural settlements. The railways have held an important share of economic power as a result of their early monopoly on moving commodities in and out of the west. The Crows Nest Pass Rates Agreement, concluded in 1897 between the CPR and the federal government, was an early attempt to guarantee producers reasonable rates for transporting prairie grain. In return for a land grant of 3.7 million acres in the Kootenay mineral fields and a \$3.4 million subsidy to build a line through the Crows Nest Pass, the CPR agreed to move grain and flour at the rate of one-half cent per ton/mile "in perpetuity". In 1925 this rate was

established by a Statute of Parliament and was applied to the CNR as well (The Peoples' Food Commission 1980:49).

Despite protections on the cost of transporting grain, and rising wheat prices on the international market in the early 1900's, rising costs of production made farming a losing venture for many. Aside from land prices being driven up by speculators, five large grain companies dominated the Winnipeg Grain Exchange and the manipulation of prices was common. Grain prices fluctuated wildly, often being so low in the fall when farmers wanted to sell that the costs of production could not even be recovered. The railways, however, would not accept grain directly from farmers so the farmers were forced to sell to elevators run by the grain companies at the established prices.

In an attempt to remain viable, prairie farmers began in 1906 to organize their own co-operative grain marketing companies to compete with the private elevators. In addition, production was intensified in an attempt to become more profitable. Because of the low rainfall and tough soils encountered in the prairies, this move towards intensification involved mechanization. "The prairies and semi-arid plains became the cradle of farm technology" (Padfield 1980:163).

Control of manufacturing by industry in eastern Canada and the United States and discriminatory freight rates by the rail lines drove the costs of farm equipment up, increasing the capital requirements of the individual producer. Many farmers turned to the banks for credit, or to off-farm labour. Rising interest rates during the economic crisis of the 1930's and the associated high levels of unemployment forced many into bankruptcy.

Following the crisis of the 1930's, the need to stabilize wheat prices was recognized by the federal government, and in 1936 the Canadian Wheat Board was set up to "buy all Canadian wheat at reasonable prices, to allocate equitable quotas for delivery, and to sell the wheat at the best price" (The Peoples' Food Commission 1980:49). The prices set and quotas for delivery are still based on international sales and trade agreements and are thus subject to a great deal of variation.

The costs of agricultural production continued to rise, but during World War II and the years directly following, grain prices were high and the tempo of intensification of production and expansion of individual land holdings increased rapidly. The intensification of grain farming included not only the use of large gas or diesel powered machinery, but also new varieties of high yield seed, and an increased use of inorganic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides to further increase yields and reduce losses. This process has produced economic and social problems similar to those discussed in reference to the "Green Revolution" (Lappe and Collins 1978, George 1977).

The major outcome of the Green Revolution has been to make agriculture so capital intensive that smaller farmers cannot compete. The use of higher yield hybrid seeds requires the use of additional inputs in terms of fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides. In turn, in order to be profitable with such high investments even more land must be put into production. The use of gas powered machinery which is necessitated by large tracts of land reduces the need for large inputs of human labour, thus contributing to rural unemployment.

The logic of this type of agriculture is to maximize yield per acre through increased capital investment. A bad crop year under high capital investment conditions has resulted in massive debts being incurred by individual producers. Under these conditions only the largest farms have been able to remain in operation without additional capital inputs. The 1981 Statistics Canada Summary of Agriculture indicates an increasing trend among small and medium farm operators towards a dependence on seasonal, part-time and in some cases full time non-farm labour to supplement farm incomes.

In my own research it was apparent that in addition to non-farm incomes being sought on the part of farm operators -- which for census purposes generally refers to the male farm household heads -- farm women make a substantial contribution to household income. Recent American studies would suggest that the contribution of women to family farm incomes through non-farm labour is forty percent or higher in some cases (Vail 1982:26).

In addition to these trends, events over the past fifteen years have exacerbated the situation for prairie farmers. In 1973 Cargill Grain, the world's largest grain trader, bought Pioneer, a private Canadian elevator company. At about the same time Otto Lang, then minister responsible for the Wheat Board, took the selling of feed grain away from the Wheat Board, undermining the stabilizing effect of the Wheat Board and leaving a large opening for private traders such as Cargill (The Peoples' Food Commission 1980:50).

In conjunction with this change in wheat marketing, Otto Lang, the CPR and Cargill launched a combined attack on the Crow Rates, planned the

establishment of large centrally located inland grain terminals and the closure of smaller elevators, and the abandonment of 6,808 miles of branch rail lines in the prairies. In sum, this created a situation whereby the producer was forced to pick up an ever greater portion of the transportation costs.

What is really at stake is control over the grain resource in the foreseeable future. Under the Canadian Wheat Board, grain had become a publicly-regulated commodity with limited profit potential for either the railways or private grain trade. But with a return to the flexibility of the open market, the possibility of unloading a greater burden of the costs on to farmers and lifting of the long-standing Crow Rates, the profit future is golden for agribusiness (The Peoples' Food Commission 1980:51).

With the support of the Chase Manhattan Bank, as well as other major banks, Cargill and other multinationals have gained manipulative control over the world cereals market. These international firms have been the instruments of a shift in U.S. policy from "keeping large wheat stocks, sold at a loss to poor nations, to a policy of reducing wheat stocks through hard sell and a cutback in supply" (The Peoples' Food Commission 1980:51).

In the U.S. and Brazil such moves have put Cargill and other multinationals in a position to buy up agricultural land. As the costs of transportation to the farmers is forced up and grain prices are forced down, a similar move could occur in Canada.

The practice in Western Europe of guaranteeing high prices to farmers and the government purchase of surplus produce has exacerbated the situation for farmers in other regions by further driving down prices on the international market (Winnipeg Free Press, October 22, 1987:30). It is clear, then, that one must look beyond the individual producers and

specific local conditions to understand the source of economic decline and crisis in rural areas. As Padfield (1980:173) suggests, "clues to the mystery of the small community's demise are not to be found locally, but in faraway places, like the central headquarters for multinational corporations and regulatory agencies."

### 1.2 Parameters of the Micro/Macro Distinction.

The terms micro-level and macro-level are relative to the type of research being conducted. All research involves particular units of analysis as well as the study of processes. These units are composed of smaller units as well as being part of larger units in the same way that processes contain sub-processes and in turn are a part of larger systems. DeWalt and Pelto (1985:2) suggest that the discussion of micro and macro levels for any given research must involve parameters of space, causality and time:

In all these dimensions the concept "micro" and "macro" cannot be defined as absolutes but have meaning only in terms of the inter-relationships of the units, processes and time frames under consideration.

The parameters of space in the micro-macro distinction are commonly defined in terms of the size and location of the units being considered, i.e., the individual versus the aggregate or levels of organization such as village, region, province, nation, world. The distinction of a scale of causality in anthropology has frequently revolved around the question of whether events are to be understood as resulting from processes originating at the local level or as a result of external forces. The time scale of micro-macro relationships pertains to whether the research

is designed to consider immediate causes or to consider a broader dimension of time.

Any discussion of the relationship between micro and macro phenomena or processes must then define the parameters of the units. These units of analysis and the relevant scales for defining them will by necessity vary depending on the demands of the problem being researched and the theoretical perspective that guides the research, all of which will have implications for the research methodology.

### 1.3 The Development of Micro-Macro Distinctions in Anthropology.

For anthropology or more specifically ethnography, the minimum distinction of the micro-level has most commonly been the village, band, or local group. In thinking about the relationships between small demographic groupings of people -- the micro-level, and larger more inclusive pluralities -- the macro-level, anthropology has gone through a number of shifts over the years. As the changing world situation has brought new aspects of these relationships to our attention, the emphasis has shifted from the micro-level to the macro-level. These changes in emphasis have also signified dramatic shifts in ideological perspectives. In addition, these developments in anthropological thinking have involved a type of cross-fertilization from related disciplines such as sociology, history, political studies and economics.

One of the earliest modes of thinking about micro and macro grew up in the context of urbanizing and industrializing 19th century Europe where social evolution, the dominant intellectual tradition of the time, portrayed society as moving from a homogenous structure to a heterogenous

structure. Tönnies's (1955) formulation of *Gemeinschaft - Gesellschaft* (community - society) is representative of this intellectual tradition. At this time a division of labour occurred in the social sciences whereby anthropology went on to dedicate the bulk of its efforts to the study of the small scale primitive community and sociology concentrated primarily on large scale society.

Robert Redfield, influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology and its pioneering work in the area of community studies, formulated the idea of the folk-urban continuum. Redfield identifies certain elements of a social system as belonging to the folk or traditional end and others as belonging to the urban or modern end. For Redfield there were four essential qualities of the folk community: distinctiveness -- where the community begins and ends is apparent to insiders and outsiders; small size -- amenable to direct personal observation; homogeneity -- only distinctions of age and sex are primary; self-sufficiency -- providing for all or most of the needs of the people (Redfield 1955:4). The ideas of a typical biography, group personality and common outlook on life are also thought to be embodied in the folk community. Redfield's typifications focus on an ideal isolated folk community, however, which he concedes does not exist in reality. Those elements such as state institutions which do not correspond to the folk ideal are treated as "frontiers" on the margins of which folk society adjusts to the new conditions. In so doing the folk-urban continuum fails to take account of the political and economic forces that shape these communities (Redfield 1955). This formulation suggests that the micro system can be geographically defined and the

characteristics of the micro system are not typical of society as a whole and will eventually give way to the dominant macro system.

In the colonial period anthropology became concerned with describing and explaining the rationality of traditional ways of life in order to defend them against interventions of the colonial power. The micro-macro issue began to be expressed in terms of the impact on local groups and communities of the external institutions and organizational apparatus of government. This issue, however, was not seen as having any relevance in rural areas of North America or Europe:

The local external relationship there was visualized as "normal": rural communities were seen as components of the total society, conducting their affairs in full awareness of their role and position in the nation. Nation was an accomplished fact; not a social problem. Change was part of "progress"; it was normalized, accepted by the rural population (Bennett 1985:25).

Because the local-external relationship was not viewed as a problem, there was a tendency to assume that the processes that were at work in a given village or locality were representative of the nation as a whole. Both Warner (1952) and Stacey (1960) are examples of research conducted under this assumption.

At the close of the colonial era, with the dismantling of colonial empires and the formation of new nation states, anthropologists were forced to take a new view of micro-macro relationships. As the national state came to be the dominant political frame for tribal and peasant societies, anthropology soon discovered "that the social forms of the small community or any localized demographic unit were not created in situ, but evolve in complex relationship with the institutions of larger societies" (Bennett 1985:27). In addition, the problems of

micro-macro interaction were no longer viewed as restricted to post colonial populations; they began to be viewed as applicable to all societies and all nations. The focus became one of discovering how the local and external combined into a large and interactive whole (Bennett 1985:28).

Early efforts in this vein attempted to show the relationship between the local level and the institutions and processes of society. Walter Goldschmidt's As You Sow, (1947), is a study of the effects of industrialized agriculture in the town of Wasco, California. Goldschmidt documents the advent of industrialized agriculture in Wasco; using town records, United States census data, and his own survey, he shows how the concomitant changes in the town's economy has resulted in stronger class distinctions. A comprehensive review of the institutional structure of the town indicates that non-local institutions gained importance and the function of town institutions changed to promote and perpetuate social and economic distinctions rather than address common local problems as the local institutions had originally done. Case studies of individuals and households from different positions in the town's social structure show how the formal and informal institutions and associations are used by members of the town to cope with the changing situation and attempt to achieve their goals.

In Viddich and Bensman's Small Town in Mass Society (1958) the authors examine the institutional and ideological relationship between the town of 'Springdale' and the state and nation, as well as the way in which both internal and external processes contribute to the rural 'class structure'. Class, as it is used by Viddich and Bensman, is an index of productive

activity, consumption patterns and social behavior or lifestyle (1958:51-52). In addition, the relationship of the individual to the community is examined and the authors present a psychological interpretation which suggests that the people of 'Springdale' use techniques such as self-avoidance and self-deception in order to deal with the overall domination of their community by the mass society.

#### **1.4 The Use of Macro Theory in Anthropology**

In the process of coming to terms with the large and interactive whole, anthropology began to draw heavily on the theoretical advancements being made in other disciplines, including dependency theory, and the concept of mode of production. As a result of these influences, the frame of reference for anthropological research changed radically from the locality based or community-centred approaches. Anthropologists began to consider the effects of more global forces, including worldwide politico-economic systems and the history and theory of capitalist development, especially in terms of how these affect and change the lives of local populations (Frank 1967, Stavenhagen 1975, Wolf 1969). These approaches to social and economic phenomena incorporated broader scales of time, space, and causality than had ever been used in ethnography, leading to several problems in connecting these grand schemes to micro level research.

At the basis of the approach rather loosely termed "dependency theory" is the view that even the smallest of communities are linked to larger and more inclusive groupings through the operations of the capitalist market. André Gunder Frank is a proponent of such a dependency approach with his

metropolis-satellite model of the development of capitalism (1967).

Within this model three contradictions of capitalism are central:

expropriation of economic surplus from the many and its appropriation by the few, the polarization of the capitalist system into metropolitan center and peripheral satellites, and the continuity of the fundamental structure of the capitalist system throughout history of its expansion and transformation, due to the persistence or recreation of these contradictions everywhere at all times (Frank 1967:3)

Metropolis-satellite relations, characterized by development in the metropolis and underdevelopment and dependency in the satellite, obtain not only between the world capitalist metropolis and peripheral satellite countries but also within these countries. "Regional, local, or sectoral metropolises of the satellite country find the limitations on their development multiplied by a capitalist structure which renders them dependent on a whole chain of metropolises above them" (Frank 1967:11). Frank rejects the idea that the penetration of capital in the periphery is only partial or simply incomplete, as is suggested by ideas of "dualism".

"Aside from the deleterious political consequences of what he regards as false conceptions, his stress on the 'development of underdevelopment' as an active process of appendagization and distortion entails absolute hostility to the idea of any currently existing social forms being seen as 'traditional' and hence extrinsic to the process" (Foster-Carter 1978:49).

Criticism of the dependency approach in general has focused on two basic problems. The first and primary criticism deals with the difficulty of operationalizing concepts like dependency, metropolis and satellite. "Dependency might well suggest a macro-framework, but it did not easily manage the shift from general statements of micro-fieldwork" (Foster-Carter 1978:49). The second shortcoming of the dependency approach is the lack of attention given to uniquely local processes. Wallerstein (1974)

documented the expansion of capitalism from its origins in 16th century Europe, characterizing it with the terms "core" and "periphery", however,

... emphasis on the effects of the overall structure of the system have led him to neglect the extent to which historically given class structures determine local responses to the market (Evens 1980:18, my italics)

The dependency approach treats the various levels of the metropolis-satellite or core-periphery relations as if they are qualitatively identical with a single relation -- that of dependency -- binding various levels together. The small community or locality is seen as being a miniature reproduction of the national and international class structure with no provision given for independent processes. The generated view is that of a passive, non-reactive local level.

Use of the mode of production concept has overcome some of the deficits in dependency and world systems approaches by directing particular attention to historically given class structures and uniquely local processes. Some anthropologists have gone to great lengths to emphasize the importance of local history and local class relations, often describing in detail the tenacious persistence of pre-capitalist modes of production despite capitalist incursions (e.g., Smith 1978, 1985). Others, most notably Laclau (1971), have suggested that in fact capitalism neither dissolves nor evolves from that which precedes it. Laclau suggests that in Latin America capitalism intensified or even created feudal and other pre-capitalist modes, thus strengthening its own hold in the region.

The present notion of articulation of modes of production, which can be traced to the work of Pierre-Philippe Rey (1973), distinguishes three stages of articulation in the process of transition to capitalism. In the

first phase capitalism reinforces the pre-capitalist mode, in the second phase capitalism subordinates but still makes use of the pre-capitalist mode, and the third phase is the total disappearance of the pre-capitalist mode (Foster-Carter 1978:56). The implication of this position is that with time and further integration into the capitalist mode of production, all other modes and social relations will be replaced with capitalist relations.

Eric Wolf defined a mode of production as "a specific historically occurring set of social relations through which labor is deployed to wrest energy from nature by means of tools, skills, organization, and knowledge" (1982:75). He emphasizes that the strength of the concept is not in its ability to classify but in "its capacity to underline the strategic relationships involved in the deployment of social labor by organized human pluralities" (Wolf 1982:76). The concept allows us to see intersystemic as well as intrasystemic relationships and the conflicts and contradictions which result from the articulation of different modes.

### 1.5 Micro/Macro Linkages.

Different types of problems have led researchers to think about units of analysis at either the macro-level or the micro-level. In both cases assumptions about one level have been stretched to discuss the other with unsatisfactory results. This has led to a new orientation in which researchers make a self conscious attempt to bridge the gap between the levels. Up to this point we have not been "able to adequately explain how relatively small-scale events and processes (micro-level phenomena) are related to larger scale events and processes (macro-level)" (DeWalt and

Pelto 1985:1). Recent attempts to overcome this deficit in method and theory in anthropology have resulted from increased efforts to come to terms with world systems and complex societies in ethnographic fieldwork.

John Bennett (1985) proposes a framework for studying micro-macro, local-external relationships which gives attention to the mediating institutions and processes. He stresses concreteness, specification of the nature of geographical and social space for a given locality, determination of the major quantitative and qualitative dimensions of exchange, and the use of an adaptational frame of reference as means of locating and operationalizing these points of articulation.

By concreteness, Bennett refers to locating the "units of observation and analysis in real times, places and institutions" (Bennett 1985:36). Understanding the processes of influence and change in the local-external relationship cannot rely on typologizing and generalizing, as these will vary at different times and in different places.

Specification of geographical and social space is necessary to define external relationships as well as to "demarcate the internal territorial and time-distance relationships" (Bennett 1985:37). In examining a typical North American rural setting with an open country neighbourhood settlement pattern, Bennett suggests that the local community may usefully be viewed as existing within five 'spheres'. The "migration sphere" refers to the geographical spread of persons who formally lived in the community. This includes dispersed kinship networks, friendships, vacations, and travel to ceremonials. The "resource allocation sphere" looks to the loci of power to assign rights to key resources to community members, such as bureaus that control government land, organizations that

control credit, water rights, and taxation. The "marketing sphere" examines the mechanism for selling locally produced items, including local garden products, manufactured items and cash crops. Either local or external agencies may perform the distribution function. The "local shopping sphere" is determined by looking at commodities, for production and consumer goods may be acquired locally or at a distance depending on transportation facilities and cost. The "kinship sphere" looks at the movement of people aside from migration. People will move within the region for a variety of purposes, including marriage, visiting relatives, and helping with chores (Bennett 1985:36).

Each of these spheres will produce a map of movement, social connections and need satisfaction with flexible boundaries, depending on what is being observed at what time. These 'maps', however, do not exhaust the possibilities for delineating key aspects of the micro/macro relationship. Because of the more clustered village settlement pattern in rural British communities, Frankenberg (1966) concentrated on the complex pattern of role relationships. Each research problem and setting demands its own solutions.

Depending on the problem, determining the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of exchange involves collecting detailed data on the flow of goods, services, people, energy and products in and out of the locality as well as who has the power to direct these flows. These exchanges may be expressed in monetary terms or in qualitative terms such as status (Bennett 1985:39).

An "adaptational frame of reference" refers to the strategies used by both local populations and external forces to modify and manipulate

demands to suit their own interests. "Clearly the world is moving toward a complex system of interdependency which will make simplistic ideological perspectives useless for analytical purposes" (Bennett 1985:40). While large external forces have more power to enforce their demands, attention should also be given to the abilities of the local level to respond in creative ways to achieve their own goals.

Concentrating on distinctly local processes, Cancian (1985) discusses conditions under which it may be preferable to view local systems as bounded. Distinguishing class, power and status (rank) respectively as features of international, national and local systems, Cancian turns to the class-status (rank) distinction to suggest that:

rank, or more particularly competition for rank, is usually a local, essentially social process that often has complex economic aspects. Class, or more particularly the opposition of classes, is an essentially economic process that usually has important ties outside the local setting (Cancian 1985:73).

While class, resulting from economic processes, leads to polarization of people based on differential access to resources, status or rank -- a social quality based on relative standing -- cannot produce polarization as status cannot be accumulated. In reference to his study of Zinacanteco peasants involved in local and migrant wage labour in southern Mexico, the local system is viewed as defining the relevant social universe of many of the actors whose economic fate is determined by the larger system (1985:74). The point is most clearly stated in an example given from research on 6,000 agriculturalists in eight different countries:

a low-middle-rank Iowa farmer and a low-middle-rank Punjabi peasant will behave similarly relative to their respective high-middle-rank alters .... the Iowa and Punjabi farmers will not be important reference points for each other. It is not that Iowa and Punjabi farmers have never heard of one another, or that they are unconnected by the world market for agricultural

products; it is rather that neither is a crucial immediate element in the other's day-to-day process of self-definition (1979:35-36).

Cancian developed a theory using rank or relative position within the community of reference to predict the adoption of new agricultural technologies and techniques; he found that when the local system was carefully defined, the expected curvilinear relationship between rank and adoption emerged. Upper middle class conservatism was found to be a feature of a diverse sample of agricultural populations. Broad sampling, which did not take into account the local system, produced a linear relation of economic constraints to adoption of agricultural innovations (Cancian 1985:75).

Cancian differentiates his class-rank framework from nomothetic mode of production analyses, stating that relations of production are not always the dominant organizing principle; "At the local level rank relations (positional considerations) have independent status and must be studied in their own terms" (Cancian 1985:78). Secondly, rank or status relations pertain in modern urban settings as well as simpler societies. The spread of capitalism has not necessarily destroyed local rank systems. Finally, analysis of rank systems requires that the boundaries of the local system be correctly identified as it is only in relation to these boundaries that rank behavior is meaningful.

The primary implication of Cancian's work is that attention should be given to local systems of stratification (which operate in conjunction with and in some cases in opposition to class), as explanatory frameworks, in addition to broader considerations of class. Cancian's findings of

upper middle class conservatism indicate that the local rank system has a direct impact on economic behaviour.

Salamon (1987) also gives attention to the local system as an explanatory framework. Based on research in two towns in the rural mid-western United States, ethnicity is cited as a factor in determining the quality of life and stability of rural farming communities by influencing landownership patterns. Beginning with a discussion of international, national and regional trends affecting agricultural communities, the author compares two communities, one which consists mainly of the descendants of German Catholic settlers and the other which was originally settled by "Yankees" of Anglo Protestant origin. On the one hand, the German community was active and cohesive due to a commitment on the part of its members to continuity of land and community. This commitment was exhibited in inheritance patterns, farming patterns and composition of the town population. The Yankee community, on the other hand, was essentially a bedroom community with most of its services and shops closed. The entrepreneurial commitment of these farmers, exhibited in their business orientation towards farming, is cited as underlying the general lack of social cohesion. As both communities are experiencing the same economic pressures, are equidistant from the same urban centre, and have similar quality of land, it seems that ethnicity -- by guiding economic behaviour -- is a significant factor in the strength and persistence of community social relations. Similarly, Todd and Brierly (1977:237) have noted in rural Manitoba the relationship between behaviours associated with ethnic background and attitudes towards economic development. In still other studies, divergent behavioural and attitudinal characteristics have been

attributed to differing forms of familism (Heller and Quesada 1977). Such research highlights the necessity of looking at both the community, its social relations and its cultural makeup, in addition to the impact of the capitalist system on the region and the nation.

Also considering the role of essentially local processes, LiPuma and Meltzoff (1989) have constructed a comprehensive theory aimed at elaborating the features of the local system and the articulation of these with class based relations to organize labour. This alternative theory of the relationship between culture and class expands on the macro oriented concepts of capital and class to include cultural and social phenomena and better cope with micro level phenomena. Focusing on ethnography in Spain and specifically on the transformation of Galician fishing communities under the European Economic Community, four lines of theory are joined. Reconceptualizing the Marxist concept of class within a broader concept of relations of production is suggested in order to

open the possibility of analyzing labor not simply as embedded in social relations, but as constituting the social relation that is definitive of capitalism and also internally bonded to, and inseparable from, the local forms of social organization (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:317).

Analysis would then focus on how kinship and community ties decreasingly define and distribute labour, while the class-based social relations that develop continue to be influenced by the systems they displace. As well, attention should be given to how the social relations based on kin and community coexist and contradict relations based on class (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:328). By viewing social relations as a central feature the framework proposed here shares similar concerns as those presented within a modes of production analysis.

This view of labour, allowing for the definition of an intrinsic relationship between local concepts of class and the production process, leads the analysis toward the determination of the relationship between the local or cultural criteria for class membership and the production process. Starting with Bourdieu's (1983 and 1984) expanded notion of capital, which links the construction of class to social and cultural phenomena, the authors argue that class position should be analyzed as the intersecting forms of economic capital (such as wealth and position in the production process), cultural capital (such as educational qualifications, speech and manners) and social capital (such as ancestry or a title of nobility). Economic capital is the primary form while social and cultural capital tend to have symbolic value. Bourdieu argues that each of the forms of capital contribute to class distinctions and can be converted from one form to another (Bourdieu 1983:243). Social and cultural capital, being symbolic, are subject to reinterpretation and their convertability into economic capital can vary given changing social conditions. Analysis should determine what constitutes social, economic and cultural capital, how cultural forms of capital "contribute to the definition, reproduction, and local consciousness of the class system; and what the indigenous terms are for converting one form of capital to another" (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:329).

The theory being set out also points to the ways in which integration of local communities into regional and geopolitical structures informs class stratification. The analysis here requires the description of the structures of the local community, mediating institutions and geopolitical forms and how these are structurally interconnected and influence each

other. This approach is similar to what has been suggested by Bennett (1985:40) regarding an "adaptational frame of reference". It is suggested that issues of social transformation are often framed in terms of how a local community adapts to some external force, discounting that these transformations "may themselves be a result of the relationship between the community's structure and that of the region, national government, or EC" (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:319).

The authors argue that class itself should be treated as an emergent cultural category made up of economic, social and cultural capital. Due to the general character of capitalism, these forms of capital are unevenly distributed and are constitutive of the power to organize and control a community's social reproduction (both materially and in terms of embodied dispositions such as speech and manners) and shape the institutions which symbolically reflect the community's political structure. The locally recognized aspects of economic, social and cultural capital, that is, the way these forms of capital are objectified locally, produce class statuses.

By virtue of participating in class-identified social practices, and doing so in a particular way, an agent exhibits forms of capital which, as we have proposed, are themselves an output of the structural unity of culture and capitalism. From the standpoint of practice, the ascription of class identity to an individual is a result of generalization and objectification about his/her participation over this range of social practices (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:322).

In an example from Andalucia, the combination of economic capital (such as owning a large estate and the ability to buy labour power), social capital (in the form of higher education), and cultural capital (such as living in a specific type of house in an upper class neighbourhood), would qualify an individual for the classification of *señorito*. The

objectification of class identity, however, will vary from place to place. Where the forms of capital embodied in an individual or group differ from the locally objectified pattern of class identity, that individual or group will have an ambiguous status (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:323).

The overwhelming implication of this emerging body of theory is that in the course of conducting ethnographic research, particular attention should be given to those factors unique to the micro-level and to the concrete ways in which the micro-level influences, and is influenced by, macro-level structures and processes. Considerations of ethnicity and local forms of differentiation and stratification must be viewed in relation to the larger society because it is only in this relation that economic behaviour at the local level is meaningful.

## Chapter 2

### THE COMMUNITY OF ELPHINSTONE

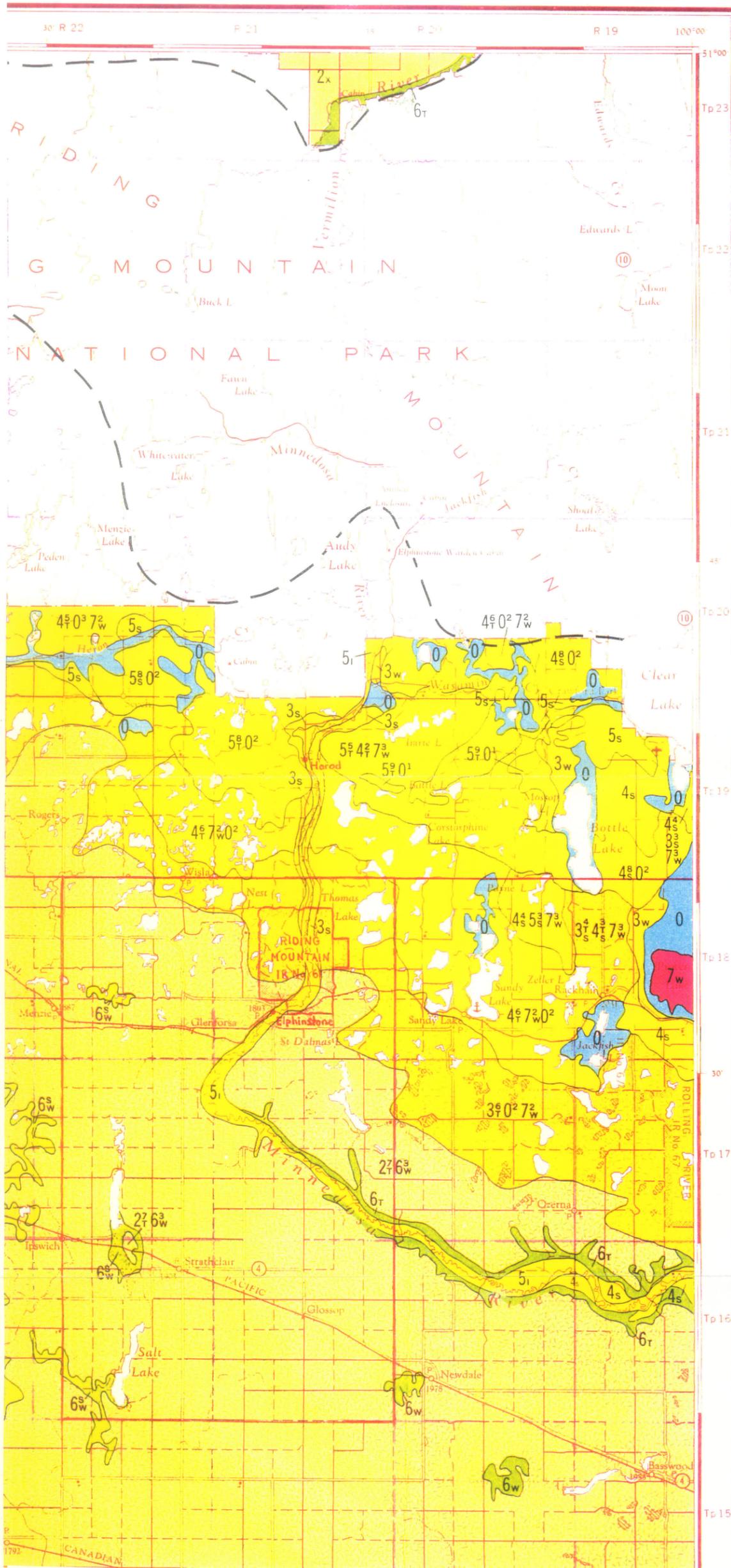
In this chapter I will examine the conditions which have given rise to economic instability in the community of Elphinstone, and lay a foundation for an understanding of the diversity of strategies which have emerged in this setting and the implications of these strategies.

#### 2.1 A Regional Overview

The area in which research was conducted is centered on the village of Elphinstone and includes the Rural Municipality of Strathclair, the Local Government District of Park, and the Keeseekoowenin Indian reserve. The village of Elphinstone is situated 20 kilometers south of the Riding Mountain National Park in the north-eastern part of the Rural Municipality of Strathclair. The elevation in the municipality is between 550 and 580 meters. The climate of this region is continental, the mean summer temperature from June to August is 62°F; the mean winter temperature from December to February is 1°F.

The soil characteristics are not uniform throughout the research area, thus affecting the agricultural potential of the land. In the Municipality of Strathclair there is a fairly uniform layer of glacial till; the soil is moderately calcareous and loamy. Most of the 52,446 square kilometers included in the municipality is in the Black soil zone.

# CANADA LAND INVENTORY SOIL CAPABILITY FOR AGRICULTURE



SOIL CAPABILITY FOR AGRICULTURE - R.M. OF STRATHCLAIR AND L.G.D.P. (SOUTH)

Map 1

(Adapted from ARDA Soil Capability for Agriculture Map 62 K, 1966)

## DESCRIPTIVE LEGEND

In this classification the mineral soils are grouped into seven classes on the basis of soil survey information. Soils in classes 1, 2, 3 and 4 are considered capable of sustained use for cultivated field crops, those in classes 5 and 6 only for perennial forage crops and those in class 7 for neither.

Some of the important factors on which the classification is based are:

- The soils will be well managed and cropped, under a largely mechanized system.
- Land requiring improvements, including clearing, that can be made economically by the farmer himself, is classed according to its limitations or hazards in use after the improvements have been made. Land requiring improvements beyond the means of the farmer himself is classed according to its present condition.
- The following are not considered: distances to market, kind of roads, location, size of farms, type of ownership, cultural patterns, skill or resources of individual operators, and hazard of crop damage by storms.

The classification does not include capability of soils for trees, tree fruits, small fruits, ornamental plants, recreation, or wildlife.

The classes are based on intensity, rather than kind, of their limitations for agriculture. Each class includes many kinds of soil, and many of the soils in any class require unlike management and treatment.

**CLASS 1** SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT LIMITATIONS IN USE FOR CROPS.

The soils are deep, are well to imperfectly drained, hold moisture well, and in the virgin state were well supplied with plant nutrients. They can be managed and cropped without difficulty. Under good management they are moderately high to high in productivity for a wide range of field crops.

**CLASS 2**

SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE MODERATE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THE RANGE OF CROPS OR REQUIRE MODERATE CONSERVATION PRACTICES.

The soils are deep and hold moisture well. The limitations are moderate and the soils can be managed and cropped with little difficulty. Under good management they are moderately high to high in productivity for a fairly wide range of crops.

**CLASS 3**

SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE MODERATELY SEVERE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THE RANGE OF CROPS OR REQUIRE SPECIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES.

The limitations are more severe than for Class 2 soils. They affect one or more of the following practices: timing and ease of tillage; planting and harvesting; choice of crops; and methods of conservation. Under good management they are fair to moderately high in productivity for a fair range of crops.

**CLASS 4**

SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE SEVERE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THE RANGE OF CROPS OR REQUIRE SPECIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES, OR BOTH.

The limitations seriously affect one or more of the following practices: timing and ease of tillage; planting and harvesting; choice of crops; and methods of conservation. The soils are low to fair in productivity for a fair range of crops but may have high productivity for a specially adapted crop.

**CLASS 5**

SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE VERY SEVERE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THEIR CAPABILITY TO PRODUCING PERENNIAL FORAGE CROPS, AND IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES ARE FEASIBLE.

The limitations are so severe that the soils are not capable of use for sustained production of annual field crops. The soils are capable of producing native or tame species of perennial forage plants, and may be improved by use of farm machinery. The improvement practices may include clearing of bush, cultivation, seeding, fertilizing, or water control.

**CLASS 6**

SOILS IN THIS CLASS ARE CAPABLE ONLY OF PRODUCING PERENNIAL FORAGE CROPS, AND IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES ARE NOT FEASIBLE.

The soils provide some sustained grazing for farm animals, but the limitations are so severe that improvement by use of farm machinery is impractical. The terrain may be unsuitable for use of farm machinery, or the soils may not respond to improvement, or the grazing season may be very short.

**CLASS 7**

SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE NO CAPABILITY FOR ARABLE CULTURE OR PERMANENT PASTURE.

This class also includes rockland, other non-soil areas, and bodies of water too small to show on the maps.

**0**

ORGANIC SOILS (Not placed in capability classes).

### SUBCLASSES

Excepting Class 1, the classes are divided into subclasses on the basis of one or more of nine kinds of limitation. The subclasses are as follows:

**SUBCLASS C:** adverse climate — The main limitation is low temperature or low or poor distribution of rainfall during the cropping season, or a combination of these.

**SUBCLASS E:** erosion damage — Past damage from erosion limits agricultural use of the land.

**SUBCLASS I:** inundation — Flooding by streams or lakes limits agricultural use.

**SUBCLASS P:** stoniness — Stones interfere with tillage, planting, and harvesting.

**\*SUBCLASS R:** shallowness to solid bedrock — Solid bedrock is less than three feet from the surface.

**SUBCLASS S:** adverse soil characteristics — Adverse characteristics include one or more of the following: undesirable structure, low permeability, a restricted rooting zone because of soil characteristics, low natural fertility, low moisture-holding capacity, salinity.

**SUBCLASS T:** adverse topography — Either steepness or the pattern of slopes limits agricultural use.

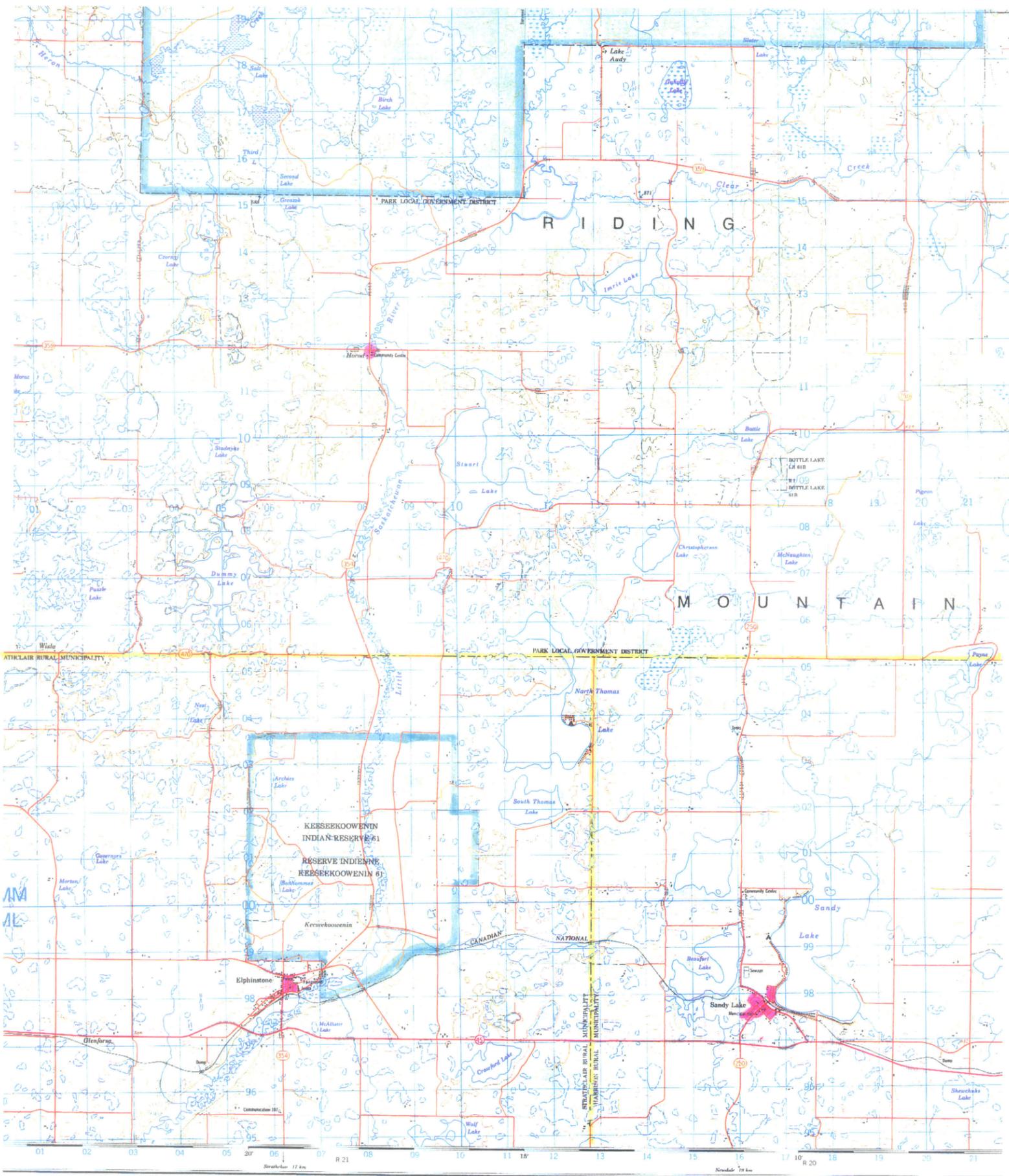
On the soil capability for agriculture scale of 1 to 7, where 1 indicates the highest potential and 7 the lowest, 70 percent of the area is classed as having a soil capability of 2, and 30 percent of the area has a soil capability of 6 (Refer to Map 1). The primary limitations in the class 2 area are topographical; either steepness or the pattern of slopes limits agricultural use. Class 6 land is limited by excess water due to poor drainage. Adjacent to the village of Elphinstone and included in the above description of soil characteristics is the Keeseekoowenin Indian Reserve 61 with an area of 2,446 square kilometers.

To the north of the Municipality of Strathclair and bordering on the national park is the Local Government District of Park (L.G.D.P.) which covers an area of 49,781 square kilometers. This hilly region, in the north-eastern section of the research area, is transitional to the Gray Wooded soil zone. The glacial till here is covered by water-sorted gravel, sands and loamy materials. This area is more complex, having soils ranging from class 3 to class 5, as well as having deposits of organic soil which have no capacity for agriculture. The limitations in this area also are slopes and poor water drainage. In addition, there are areas with poor soil structure (Refer to Map 1). In general, farm land in the southern and western portion of the research area are superior, capable of supporting a broad range of crops, compared to the northern and eastern parts of the region, much of which, due to steep grades, poor water drainage and poor soil structure, is best suited for tame hay and other forage crops.

## 2.2 A Brief History of Elphinstone

Situated in the valley of the Little Saskatchewan River, the village of Elphinstone was initially the site of the Hudson's Bay Company Riding Mountain Post set up in the late 1850's to trade with a band of Saukteaux-speaking Indians from the Lake Audy area to the north (Strathclair Centennial History Committee, 1970). In 1875 a treaty was signed with the Lake Audy band and approximately 5,900 acres of land near the Riding Mountain Post, extending northward towards the Riding Mountain Timber Reserve, was set aside for the Riding Mountain Indian Reserve. In addition to the reserve land, the treaty also granted exclusive hunting and fishing rights to two parcels of land, one on the west side of Bottle Lake and the other on the west side of Clear Lake, both of which were revoked when the timber reserve became a national park in 1930.

The Little Saskatchewan River is slow and meandering, often no more than 15 feet across, winding back and forth across the broad river flats covered with willows and grass. Between 1873 and 1876, the gently rolling, rich soiled, prairie land in the district south of the river was surveyed and a steady influx of settlers followed, first taking up squatters claims and then applying for homesteads beginning in 1877. This first wave of settlers into the area came from eastern Canada or the midwestern United States where inexpensive land was no longer available. Many of these British and Scottish homesteaders had no experience in farming, and for several years land was sold and bought by speculators and potential farmers alike. As families followed, schools and churches were established throughout the area.



**ELPHINSTONE**  
MANITOBA

**Map 2**

(Adapted from Energy, Mines and Resources Map 62 K/9, Series A743, 1989)

In the early years, the pioneers of this area tell of being able to see for miles, there being few trees on the unbroken prairie. Prairie fires were dreaded and the red glow of such fires on the horizon struck terror in the hearts of those whose homes and land were there. Equally dreaded were the blizzards, there being no fences to follow, nor trees to break the sweep of the wind. Wood for fuel and logs for buildings had to be hauled from the river hills north of what is now Elphinstone. As more land was broken and prairie fires brought under control, bluffs of small poplars quickly spread out from the wetter places and fuel became less of a problem. Today, long lines of trees stand as wind breaks along most road allowances and property boundaries and the locations of old homesteads can be spotted from miles away by the tall spruce trees which stand high above all else.

In 1900, when the boundary of the Riding Mountain Timber Reserve was moved further north to the present day national park boundary, the more rugged and heavily wooded land north and west of the river was quickly surveyed to make way for a new wave of settlers from central Europe, primarily the Ukraine and Poland. The Ukrainian population set up their own churches and Ukrainian language schools. In 1897, section 258 of the Manitoba School act was established allowing for bilingual education of immigrants (Pinuta 1978:23). In 1916, this section was abolished and area children continued to receive Ukrainian language training after school hours. Following school consolidation in the 1960's all children from the area attended school in Elphinstone.

The Ukrainians were largely of peasant origin and, although the land they settled was not ideal for grain farming, having steep grades and

sandy, rocky soil, it was well suited to their accustomed mixed farming strategy, each homestead having trees, water, pasture and some potentially arable land. Today, where possible, the wooded areas have been cleared and planted with grass for pasture. There are visible soil erosion problems in many fields where seed crops have been planted.

As the local farming population grew, the Hudson's Bay Company expanded its operations, setting up a flour mill in 1879 and a lumber mill in 1882. In 1885, when the North Western rail line came through nine miles to the south, much of the growing settler's trade shifted to villages along the rail line. Although the Riding Mountain Post continued to trade heavily with the nearby Indian band, the fur bearing animals were gradually becoming more scarce as a result of increased farming settlement in the area. In 1895, the Riding Mountain Post closed and the store, post office, and three lots of what had been officially known since 1881 as the townsite of Elphinstone, were sold and continued to be run independently.

The Canadian Northern Rail line came through Elphinstone in 1904-5, and in 1914 this line was bought by the CNR. The Northern Elevator Company opened the first elevator in 1907. This elevator was bought by the Elphinstone Pool Elevator Association when it was formed in 1928. An Inter-Ocean Elevator was built a few years later and was subsequently bought by the Pioneer Elevator Company. It was not until 1937 that a provincial highway passed through the town.

By 1950, there was a great deal of activity centered around Elphinstone. In addition to two grain elevators, there was a primary and high school, three churches, a legion hall, and both a hockey and a curling rink. Several businesses were operating at the time, including a

farm machinery agency, three garages, a hotel and beverage room, three general stores, four convenience store/coffee shops, a poolroom and barbershop, a bowling alley, a funeral home, and a farm fuel agent. In addition, Elphinstone was also the location for an RCMP detachment and a government post office (Strathclair Centennial History Committee, 1970). Since its florescence in the years immediately following World War Two, Elphinstone, like many small rural villages, has experienced a continual decline in population and the institutions which serve the village. This decline is directly related to the more general trend of decline affecting agriculture throughout North America.

### 2.3 The International System and the Local Situation in Elphinstone

In Chapter One, I have discussed some of the factors underlying economic decline in farming. This section will discuss how the general international economic trends and national policy have affected rural areas, with specific reference to the region of Elphinstone, Manitoba.

Economic decline in rural villages is directly related to a decreasing market for most goods and services. Those goods and services which have increased in importance, such as machinery sales and service, farm fuel sales, and the sale of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides have become enterprises requiring capital investments far beyond the ability of local entrepreneurs to meet, due to rising costs. In addition, with low grain prices, farmers have put off major investments such as new machinery, making it even more difficult for the businessmen. Grain combines sell for an average of \$142,000 and a 200-horsepower tractor costs \$130,000; at these prices farmers have increasingly chosen to buy used equipment and

repair old equipment. Although farm implement dealers have seen an increased demand placed on their service departments, there has been a 30 percent reduction in new farm machinery purchases since 1979 and 25 percent of machinery dealerships in the Prairies have closed since 1983 (Winnipeg Free Press, July 17, 1988:2). These services have increasingly centralized in larger towns and cities and important sources of local employment have been lost as a result.

Several Elphinstone businesses have moved out or been closed over the years. In 1983, the farm fuel agent operating in Elphinstone closed due to financial difficulties; service for the area is now handled by the agent in a town twenty miles away. In addition to fuel, this business also handled fertilizers and other farm chemicals. Farmers must now travel greater distances to pick up their fuel and pay more to have it delivered to their farms. Although the agent himself now works for the company which took over service for the area, three jobs in the town were lost as a result of the closure.

Other privately owned businesses in town have closed upon retirement of the owners. The corner cafe, which had been operated by a husband and wife, closed in 1980 when the husband began receiving old age pension. Although the business had been for sale for more than two years, they were unable to find a buyer to continue operating the cafe. Finally, the building was purchased by a former resident of the town, who returned to open a garlic sausage business. This business is almost entirely family operated, employing two other people from town on an occasional basis, and markets its product throughout southern Manitoba.

One garage in town, which operated a snowmobile dealership, gasoline pumps and an automobile repair service, closed in 1980. This business was operated by two brothers, and one part-time hired man. In addition to operating the business, the brothers were part of a family farm corporation at the time and continue to be. The closure of this business followed two winters of slow snowmobile sales, due to both the lack of snow and poor economic conditions in the area. The building has remained empty since 1980. The privately owned businesses which remain in town are as follows: a hotel with a coffee shop and beverage room; one general store, which has recently cut back its stock to include only groceries and liquor; a convenience store with gas pumps; and a welding shop and backhoe service. In addition, a garage is operated part time by a young man awaiting his father's retirement from farming.

Another major business in Elphinstone is the grain elevator. In 1978 the Pioneer Elevator was closed and moved ten miles south to another rail line. This move was a part of the Cargill Grain Company's plans to centralize elevator services after their purchase of Pioneer in 1973 as was discussed above. During my research, in July 1987, it was announced by the Pool Elevator company that the Elphinstone elevator would be closed in August, 1988. After this time, farmers would be forced to travel longer distances to other elevators to deliver grain and purchase herbicides which the elevator is a major supplier of, meaning higher transportation costs for the individual farmer. The regional coordinator of the National Farmers Union said the closing of this and other elevators was an attempt by Manitoba Pool to transfer costs from the company to the farmer (Winnipeg Free Press, Tuesday, August 11, 1987:2). On top of the

\$7.02 per tonne that the Manitoba Pool currently charges for handling wheat, the farmer will have to pay added fuel costs. For some, this situation will require the purchase of a new grain truck, or as an alternative, paying someone else to haul their grain. The reason given by the Manitoba Pool Association for the closure of the elevator was the declining volumes of grain being processed. Manitoba Pool has decreased the number of elevators it operates from 350 to 155 over the past fifteen years (Winnipeg Free Press, Tuesday, August 11, 1987:2). Associated with these closures is the construction of new larger capacity elevators in more central locations (Ibid, Sunday, October 4, 1987:2). The closure of both elevators in Elphinstone will have a severe impact on the entire town as well as farm operations. With the closure of the Pioneer elevator in 1978 there was a loss of three jobs, with the Pool elevator there will be two more full time jobs leaving the town. As farmers are forced to go elsewhere to sell grain, local business owners are certain that they will also tend to do more of their other business out of town.

The consequence of business closures and lack of other employment opportunities for the demographic structure of small rural villages is a net out migration of employable people, especially those in the range of 20-44 years of age. Because these are also the people of childbearing age, Padfield notes that with such an out migration a village or town also loses its potential for population replacement (1980:175).

In Elphinstone these changes can be seen in overall population loss and in changes in the population structure of the area. Table 1 shows population decline beginning in the municipality of Strathclair between the 1941 and 1951 censuses, and continuing through to the most recent

census in 1986. The beginning of this trend towards population loss, coincides with the rise to prominence of highly mechanized capital intensive agricultural methods.

Table 1

## Population 1921-1986

Year	Village of Elphinstone	Village of Strathclair	Keeseekooweenin	R.M. of Strathclair	L.G.D.P
1921	* -	-	-	2,235	-
1931	-	-	-	2,313	-
1941	-	-	-	2,338	-
1951	-	-	-	2,211	** 1,694
1956	-	-	-	2,082	1,464
1961	-	-	-	2,012	1,390
1966	-	-	-	1,825	1,238
1971	299	404	-	1,569	1,075
1976	236	396	-	1,380	993
1981	-	-	157	1,224	951
1986	213	386	204	1,216	945

\* population figures unavailable

\*\* unorganized district prior to this census

Source: Census Canada 1971, 1981, 1986

The following tables on population by age and sex indicate that in the municipalities of Strathclair and L.G.D.P. there is a dearth of young people with a proportionally large number of people aged 55 and older. It should be noted that the structure of the population for Keeseekooweenin is younger (Table 4) and, not being dependent on the farm economy, does not reflect the same trends as Strathclair and L.G.D.P.; in fact, it has shown a significant population growth (Table 1) of 29.9% in the 1981-86 intercensal period.

All three tables show a high ratio of males to females, as is typical of rural farms and villages representing a heavy outmigration among females. Larger towns and cities have reflected inverse proportions. For

over 30 years the sex ratios for farm areas and metropolises in Canada have remained almost the same, 117 males per 100 females and 94 males per 100 females respectively (Hodge and Quadeer 1983:106).

Table 2

**Population by Age and Sex  
Rural Municipality of Strathclair, Manitoba, 1986.**

Age

75+	*****	*****
65-74 years	*****	*****
55-64 years	*****	*****
45-54 years	*****	*****
35-44 years	*****	*****
25-34 years	*****	*****
15-24 years	*****	*****
5-14 years	*****	*****
0-4 years	*****	*****
	Male	Female
	Total Male = 630	Total Female = 585

Note : \* = five

Source: Census Canada 1986

Table 3

**Population by Age and Sex  
Local Government District of Park, Manitoba, 1986.**

Age

75+	*****	*****
65-74 years	*****	*****
55-64 years	*****	*****
45-54 years	*****	*****
35-44 years	*****	*****
25-34 years	*****	*****
15-24 years	*****	*****
5-14 years	*****	*****
0-4 years	*****	*****
	Male	Female
	Total Male = 520	Total Female = 425

Note : \* = five

Source: Census Canada 1986

Table 4  
Population by Age and Sex in  
Keeseekoowenin, Manitoba, 1986.

<u>Age</u>		
75+	-	-
65-74 years	*	-
55-64 years	***	-
45-54 years	**	**
35-44 years	*	*
25-34 years	***	***
15-24 years	****	****
5-14 years	*****	***
0-4 years	**	***
	Male	Female
	Total Male = 110	Total Female = 95

Note 1 : \* = five

Note 2 : There are 15 cases missing from census data in the female column.  
Source: Census Canada 1986.

Of the three, LGDP has the highest male to female sex ratio (122:100), followed by Keeseekoowenin (115:100), and the municipality of Strathclair (107:100). It has also been suggested that these empirical norms can serve as "indicators of a community's social structure" (Hodge and Quadeer 1983:107).

As well as changes in the age structure of the population, following economic decline there tends to be an overall change in the distribution of income groups. Padfield has noted that in declining communities those with the greatest earning ability move out, thus no longer contributing to the local tax base, while those that remain or migrate to small towns tend to place ever greater burdens on the welfare system (1980:175). Thus, once the process of decline is begun, population decreases and a depleted local economy feed back on each other and in the process eat away at the local institutional structure.

The final autopsy could well occur when the crisis oriented human resource institutions, such as law enforcement, welfare, social security, and unemployment, become the main channel of allocation of public resources (Padfield 1980:178).

Unfortunately, as the Elphinstone region's need for government services and other local institutions has increased, the quality of locally provided services has decreased. With declining numbers of people in rural areas it becomes less and less cost efficient to have government services such as education and medical care provided locally, and numbers are too small to support churches and many social activities.

With regard to education, the declining population has meant decreased enrollment at the primary and secondary schools in Elphinstone. The initial response by the school board was to cut back on non-essential programs, maintenance and classroom supplies. At the elementary level two grades were taught by each teacher. In the high school, non-core courses such as French and Physics were available only by correspondence. Some parents in the area considered these changes a decrease in the quality of education being offered in town and made arrangements for their children to attend school in another district. Finally, in 1986 the high school was closed and the school division began bussing students to a town twenty miles away. For some students this means that a round trip to and from school is now up to 65 miles.

The primary school with classes to grade eight has relocated in the former high school building. In addition, the Keeseekoowenin band has recently gained control of its own education system, and has started holding classes for kindergarten to grade three on the reserve, with plans to gradually expand to teach the entire primary school curriculum. This

further decreased enrollment in the primary school makes the future of the primary school in Elphinstone uncertain.

Health care is another service which has suffered in recent years. The main problem is a shortage of doctors willing to work in rural areas. The two hospitals nearest to Elphinstone are in Shoal Lake to the south-west and Erickson to the east, both approximately 20 miles away. Each of these hospitals at the time of research had only one doctor to service the entire area. Prior to my research there had been three doctors working out of Shoal Lake but two left and the remaining doctor's daily work load had become overwhelming, including up to 60 appointments and visiting hospital patients (Winnipeg Free Press, Thursday April 28, 1988). As a result, weekly clinics are no longer held at the Elphinstone Community Hall. Patients must now wait weeks or months for an appointment or travel even greater distances to get medical care.

Home care for the elderly is available on a limited basis for which the municipality employs three people twelve hours per week in Elphinstone. This care includes such things as cooking a meal, doing laundry, or washing a floor. As young people continually leave town to find employment elsewhere there are less and less people left to care for aging relatives. Funds, however, are limited and only some of the people in need of this service are able to benefit from it.

The only other government services which remain located in town are the post office and an RCMP detachment with three officers. It is quite probable that, as the local population continues to dwindle, the post office will eventually be closed.

The churches in town have also been affected by economic decline. The Greek Orthodox church has services once a month when the priest from another church visits the town. The Roman Catholic church also has services once a month conducted by a visiting priest. The Presbyterian church, which held weekly services, was closed in 1984. Recently, a minister from the Calvary Temple started holding services in the old primary school building on a weekly basis. A number of people who formerly attended one of the three other churches now attend the Calvary Temple services, causing a great deal of controversy over the viability of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox congregations. Despite economic decline, the closure of many businesses and the removal of government services, the village of Elphinstone and its surrounding area still maintain a few and organizations and informal groups. A Lions club meets monthly and holds bingo every Wednesday night in the municipal hall. The Lions have raised money to construct a playground for the primary school and are trying to organize activities for the elderly in town. The recreation committee, responsible for the operation of the hockey and curling rink in town, is run by an elected volunteer committee and two individuals paid by government grant. The recreation committee also plans community dances three times a year, puts on an annual snowmobile poker derby, and holds an annual July first homecoming picnic and baseball tournament which attracts as many as 3,000 people annually.

It has been suggested that in some cases the existing social base in a declining community could be used to develop community organizations to express local interests with the aid of outside resources (Rohrer and Quantic 1980:156). In Elphinstone, however, people seem resigned to the

decline of their community, having put up little resistance to the closure of elevators or schools. I will demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four that the strategies which are present in the community in fact mitigate against community action to deal with problems associated with decline. These strategies have reference to both the macro socio-economic processes which have contributed to local decline, as well as the uniquely local situation. The use of micro and macro constructs is influenced by the methodology and procedures employed in data collection. These procedures and the underlying methodology are addressed in the next section.

#### 2.4 Data Collection and Data Management

Several different types of data were used in the course of this research. While participant observation was the primary method of gathering data, I also relied on various sources of existing data, as well as interviews. Because the data are of differing quality and reliability, I will attempt to outline the techniques used and evaluate the different sources of data.

In the early stages of research, prior to going into the field, I reviewed the literature on North American agriculture and rural communities and more general literature on the method and theory of community studies. During this stage, several trips were made to the Statistics Canada office in Winnipeg to collect census data about the research area. Census data were available by census subdivision, i.e., the municipality, for the most recent Canadian census in 1986. The detailed cross tabulations of census information on farm practices, landholding, household composition, and employment provided a valuable

supplement to my own research. Because of the extensiveness of the available census data, and because they were so recent (only one year old), I decided not to pursue my own survey, opting rather to use the existing data and concentrate on detailed case studies. Earlier census materials did not, as I had hoped, provide good historical comparisons at the census division and subdivision levels. Due to decreases in the area's population, there have been changes in census division boundaries. As well, earlier censuses did not include the same detailed information that is available from more recent censuses. The majority of census questions were based on a universal sample of the census subdivision. While this includes information for one other village and its surrounding area, based on my personal knowledge of the area it does give an accurate representation of population characteristics, economic activities and households.

A valuable source of information was land ownership maps for the area. A private firm prepares annually updated maps of regional municipalities indicating the legal ownership of land, the size of land holdings, roads, railways, potholes (sloughs), towns, villages, airports, hospitals, police stations, and crown land. These maps proved valuable for orientation to the area and were extremely helpful as a focus for discussion and an 'ice breaker' in some interviews.

Fieldwork was conducted during a five month period spanning the spring, summer, and fall of 1987 and an additional visit during July of 1988. The community of Elphinstone was selected for research because of its small size and my familiarity with the area -- I had previous ties to the area and had lived there myself several years earlier, for a period of four

years. In conducting my fieldwork I had access to copies of two autobiographies written by elderly residents of the area when they were in their eighties. One was written by a man born in the Ukraine in 1902 who moved to Canada at the age of nine, and the other was written by a man of Scottish background born near the town site in 1883. In light of general history on the settlement of the Canadian prairies and the experiences of various ethnic groups, these life stories are interesting in that they personalize the experience of growing up in a newly settled region of the prairies and give some insight into both the everyday way of life as well as rationalizations for major life decisions. In addition, these documents provide rather detailed background information on several aspects of the village.

Another source of information was a municipal history prepared for the 100th anniversary of settlement in the municipality. This history contained recollections and anecdotes as told by original residents of the area, excerpts of school records and municipal council records, and short family histories of most of the longtime residents of the area written by family members.

The primary technique for collecting data was participant observation. As the name implies, this technique entails both active involvement in the activities of the group during the course of conducting research as well as observation. My entrance into the role of a participant-observer was facilitated by the fact that I had previous involvement as a member of the research setting. As Crane and Angrosino suggest, participant observation is more a "state of mind, a framework for living in the field, than a specific program of action" (1984:64-65). Thus, whenever one becomes

involved in an activity with the intent of learning more about that activity, the people involved and their context, one could be said to be conducting participant observation. Spradley (1980:54-58) suggests six differences between the participant role and the participant observer. The first difference is the dual purpose of the participant observer, engaging in activities appropriate to the situation as any ordinary participant would, and observing the activities, people and physical aspects of the setting. The participant observer must be explicitly aware of the setting, not tuning out the details one would as an ordinary participant. The role of participant observer requires using a 'wide angle lens' to take in a much broader spectrum of information, as well as oscillating between the role of insider and outsider, a high degree of introspection over common occurrences, and detailed record keeping. In a scientific framework, participant observation is perhaps most useful as a means of hypothesis formation because the high level of involvement in activities allows the researcher to see relationships between behaviors and events that may otherwise have seemed unrelated. I therefore attempted to follow up those observations which were relevant to this research with interviews and by going over available statistical data.

I became involved in a number of activities in order to learn more about the social dynamics of the community. These activities ranged from highly informal and routine, such as grocery shopping, picking up the mail, having a drink at the local pub, working in a garden, cooking a meal or picking berries, to more formal and highly planned activities such as attending a church dinner or town picnic.

This high level of involvement in the activities of the group being researched raises some interesting methodological and ethical issues. By using the participant observation approach I was becoming a player in the dynamic I was attempting to study. This fact raises an ethical issue; there were certainly times when the people I was interacting with forgot that I was doing research and allowed me to gain 'secret' knowledge which was not intended to go any further. These two issues emerged constantly as people shared gossip and at times obliged me to take a position on controversial issues. If I were to write up the piece of gossip that I heard, and the person who was the subject of the gossip found out some day, it could potentially cause negative repercussions for the people who were just 'being themselves' around me. Because of this potential problem, where necessary I have generalized about specific cases. At times it seemed as if some individuals were trying to make me commit myself to one side or another of a controversial issue, and often enough it was difficult to keep from telling them what I really thought. As much as possible I tried to remain neutral on subjects of public debate in the community, because my own role in the community was surely becoming an important consideration in evaluating the results of my research. In general, then, I attempted to deal with these ethical and methodological issues by maintaining a high level of awareness regarding potential problems.

In dealing with these same two ethical conflicts inherent in the participant observation method -- role conflicts and the ethics of using secret information -- Judith Friedman Hansen suggests that in order to adequately document your research it is necessary to violate implicit

expectations of privacy in some cases, as long as one adequately disguises the identities of the individuals involved (1976:132-133). Because of the small size of the village in which I conducted participant observation, any attempt to simply change the names of the people involved would be insufficient to disguise their identities. While I did obtain written permission to publish the information gained in formal interviews, a substantial amount of data was obtained in less formal settings. For this reason, I initially considered presenting information from case studies of individuals in composite form. In so doing, I found myself creating a typology which was by necessity interpreting the data before they were presented. Consequently, I decided to use pseudonyms and present the case studies minus any information which might be sensitive. The interviews I conducted varied widely -- from the informal, where general attitudes on a variety of subjects of interest to the informant were the topic, to more formal interviews with pre-arranged topics to be covered. The informal interviews tended to be rather impromptu and dominated the early stages of my research. Spradley suggests that "an informal ethnographic interview occurs whenever you ask someone a question during the course of participant observation" (1980:123). I never took notes during the course of these interviews; instead, I wrote down the gist of the conversation and interesting comments after the interview was over. These early interviews provided me with a great deal of general knowledge about the area and its people and let me get to know and introduce or re-introduce myself and my research to a number of people. The information gathered in these early interviews was useful later as I moved on to prepare more formal interviews.

wanted to talk to them. I took point form notes punctuated with interesting quotes during the course of these interviews, going back to the notes as soon as possible afterwards to add in additional information. Because I already knew something about each family or household, I proceeded by double checking what I already knew, for example, the names, occupations, and places of residence of their children and other close relatives. I tried to determine the number of relatives each household had, both in the area and outside of the area, and what types of activities they engaged in with relatives and other members of the community. I asked questions about the education and employment history of household members and entrance into their current occupation, trying to focus on questions of why as much as what. I experienced few difficulties in obtaining this type of information although in every case I had to come back to these questions in subsequent interviews to complete the information. In later interviews I introduced questions about typical daily and weekly activities. I asked farmers about the size of their farm, the location of land, whether it had been bought, inherited or rented, and from whom. I also asked questions about livestock, and the area and type of crops planted. Since I did not know a great deal about farming, I found it useful to go step by step through each stage of the crop year to get at information about who performs what tasks on the farm. In none of the interviews did I attempt to elicit specific information regarding incomes or debts. While specific data on incomes may have been useful, it is generally recongized as an akward line of questioning and this akwardness was compounded by my personal ties to people in the area.

People in each of the twenty households participating in formal interviews were interviewed at least twice, with interviews generally lasting between one and two hours. With twelve of the twenty households, I held further interviews and pursued in greater detail what they saw as advantages and disadvantages of living in a small rural community like Elphinstone, as well as goals and aspirations for themselves and their children. The case studies which are presented in Chapter Three were selected for presentation on the basis of being representative of a certain segment of the local population. They exhibit a number of characteristics found among most other local people of the same age group, ethnic background, and occupation. In addition to being representative, the eight case studies presented are based on households in which I was able to establish a good rapport with one or more of the members and, as a result, was able to obtain more detailed information about the household.

## Chapter 3

### ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES IN THE LOCAL SYSTEM

I have referred to the existence of economic and social strategies for making a living in Elphinstone and have indicated that an aspect of these is the combination of income from various sources. In the course of a lifetime or even in the course of a year, an individual may obtain income from several different sources; wage labourer, farming, migrant work, a subsistence production, or even unemployment insurance. The insecurity of any given economic alternative or the desire for a higher standard of living than any single alternative can afford may make it desirable to maintain some combination of them. In this chapter I will outline the various productive opportunities exploited by members of the local system and then show how these are combined into specific strategies.

#### 3.1 Productive Opportunities

The main source of monetary income in the region is farming, both grain and oilseed agriculture and mixed crop and animal husbandry. Table 5 provides comparative data on the size and profitability of farms, and the incidence of mixed farming in the two municipalities included in the research area. Although these figures for Strathclair Municipality and L.G.D.P take into account more than the area in which research was conducted, they characterize the differences between the predominantly

Anglo farms southwest of Elphinstone in the southern half of Strathclair Municipality, and the predominantly Ukrainian farming operations northeast of Elphinstone in the northern part of Strathclair Municipality and the District of Park (South).

Table 5

**CHARACTERISTICS OF FARMS IN R.M OF STRATHCLAIR  
AND L.G.D.P (SOUTH)**

	L.G.D.P (South)	R.M. of Strathclair
	-----	-----
Number of Farms	151	184
Average Farm Size(acres)	647	775
Average Improved Land (acres)	376	562
Average Unimproved Land (acres)	294	229
Farms Reporting Cattle/Calves	96	88
Farms Reporting Pigs	20	21
Farms Reporting Hens or Chickens	54	43
Average Capital (in dollars)	187,085	278,239
Average Expenses (in dollars)	22,898	53,142
Average Sales (in dollars)	23,912	63,318

Source: Statistics Canada Census of Agriculture, 1986.

To the southwest the farms are on average larger and more profitable, while to the northwest they are more diversified in their production and have less improved land.

The second most common source of income in the research area is wage labour. Permanent full-time labour opportunities for people in the

immediate area are quite limited; much more common are part time, seasonal and migrant labour. The following table is compiled from information contained in my fieldnotes and interview notes. It should be noted that three R.C.M.P jobs and three of the four primary school jobs are held by non-local people.

Table 6

Full Time Wage Labour	Employed in Elphinstone	Employed in other Towns
R.C.M.P	3	
Primary School		4
Post Office		1
Grain Elevator		2
Nursing (LPN/RN)		2
Store Clerk		2
Mechanic		1
Bulk Fuel Delivery		1
Farm Labour	2	
Part Time Wage Labour		
Municipal Government Services	5	
Post Office		1
Janitor/Maintenance	2	
Waitress	1	2
Store Clerk		2
Self Employed	4	2

In addition to full and part-time wage earning opportunities, seasonal wage earning opportunities existed, most importantly in the National Park. The employment season lasts from the end of May to the beginning of October and opportunities existed primarily in private businesses operating in the park town site, and park maintenance. Ten area residents were working in the park at the time of my research and were planning to collect unemployment insurance benefits during the winter months. As well, tenders were occasionally posted for jobs such

as campground maintenance, cutting firewood and repairing park facilities. At the time of research one household was doing campground maintenance approximately twelve hours per week. Obtaining jobs in the park generally required a formal application process and there was a great deal of competition for these jobs within the region.

Four farmers in the area employed one or two people each year during the spring and fall, and the Recreation Committee employed two people part time to maintain the hockey and curling rinks during the winter months. Hiring for these jobs was quite informal and the same people were hired from year to year.

Seven people in the area derived a small occasional income from jobs such as carpentry, painting and small engine repairs.

Each year a few people leave the area for a part of the year to seek employment elsewhere. In the year previous to my research these included two people who were doing railway jobs, one person working in mining and two who left their families for the winter to do construction work. Seven small businesses were in operation at the time of the research of which only two, the hotel and the general store, were not operated solely by family members.

Seven people in the area maintained small trap lines during the winter months either in the river valley or around lakes and sloughs. The furs were sold to a nearby dealer who I was told transported them to Winnipeg. Six of these trappers did not own the land that they were trapping on. In some cases traps or snares were set on farmers' lands without permission and at the risk of losing the traps if they were discovered. The decline in fur prices in previous years had decreased

the importance of this activity. It was being pursued as a source of monetary income by a few teenage boys and welfare recipients.

Other sources of monetary income significant in the area were a variety of income support programs and pensions provided by various levels of government and, in the case of some retirees, former employers. In the 1986 census twenty percent of the R.M. of Strathclair and L.G. District of Park (South) combined population was sixty-five years of age and older. Because of the high percentage of elderly people in the area, old age pensions contributed substantially to the local economy. As I have already indicated, unemployment insurance benefits were collected by seasonal workers in the off-season.

Aside from monetary income, several subsistence activities were common in the area. Most households maintained a kitchen garden, although these varied in size and the percentage of household consumption that was derived from them. For ten of the households that I examined, the fruits and vegetables grown in the garden and then stored fresh, frozen or canned, provided for most of their requirements throughout the year. In addition to this, seven out of the twenty households interviewed kept hens for eggs and raised chickens, pigs or cows for their own consumption as well as for relatives and friends.

Hunting and fishing were also prevalent subsistence activities. Several lakes in the area were popular sites for fishing both summer and winter, although it was difficult to determine to what extent fish were an important food source. Hunting, however, made a significant contribution to the diet of several households in the area. Deer, ducks and geese were the most commonly hunted animals, together with moose,

elk and rabbits to a lesser degree. Three of the twenty households that were studied kept a meat freezer in an unheated annex to their house in which to store a winter's supply of wild meat, and I was aware of three other households who were similarly dependant on wild game. An even greater number of households used some wild meat, but depended on it to a lesser degree. Venison in particular was a popular ingredient in the garlic sausage made by Ukrainian residents in the area.

Other wild food sources being exploited in the area were mushrooms and berries. The particular varieties of mushrooms collected had very short growing seasons in the early spring and could be found in a limited number of areas; they were a favorite element in the diet of the Ukrainian population of the area. Wild berries, primarily saskatoons and choke cherries, were much more widespread, growing on most road allowances. These were collected in mid-summer and widely used for making preserves and wines, and in baking.

### 3.2 Household Strategies

While I have pointed out that the combination of income from several different sources was a common practice for households and individuals in the research area, for each individual and household a series of decisions were made based on their access to economic opportunities, their goals, their perceived obligations, as well as any number of idiosyncratic factors. Much like Salamon's (1987) study of ethnic differences in farm communities, it will be shown that ethnic differentiation within the local setting produces different social and economic behaviours, which I have characterized as strategies, and which

ultimately shape the character of the community. While the specifics of each case varied considerably, certain regularities did emerge. From these regularities I have constructed a typology of social and economic strategies; conservative, entrepreneurial, and marginal strategies. Because the primary economic activity in the area is agriculture, and because other full time productive opportunities are relatively scarce, the majority of households or individuals pursuing non-farming activities are forced to relocate outside of the area. As very few households are more than one generation removed from farming, I have found it useful to view these strategies as they are related to two basic forms of farming, in a manner suggestive of the stages of a farm household's life cycle. This household life cycle ends either in the perpetuation of farming in the next generation or the shift to a new occupation with the frequent result of permanent migration out of the area. In the following sections I will outline the various strategies, and in turn provide case studies as examples of each strategy to highlight the way general goals and ideals have influenced the decisions made by individuals and households to produce a specific strategy.

### 3.3.1 Conservative Strategies

These strategies exhibit a strong local orientation and emphasis on extended kin and community ties, and are dominant in the Ukrainian ethnic population of the area. All three of the established conservative farm households that were interviewed owned all of their land -- some of it through inheritance -- and had expanded their operations several years ago by buying land from non-farming relatives

and retiring farmers. One established household head was involved in off-farm labour, and in the two cases where there were grown children, they were working in the area as well as contributing to the operation of the farm, awaiting their parents' retirement from farming. Once retired, these farmers tend to maintain a heavy involvement in the operation of the farm. The two retired conservative farming households which were interviewed had split their farming operations between two children and continued to work on the farms providing assistance during seeding and harvest in the fields, caring for young children, and preparing food to be taken to the fields. Four other retired conservative farm households which were informally interviewed also maintained similar involvement in their childrens' farm operations. Because of the tendency towards smaller farms which results from the pattern of splitting family land among several siblings, the younger conservative farm households were, without exception, dependent on off-farm labour by one or more of the adult household members. In the three cases of young conservative households which were formally interviewed, the farmers were all involved in off-farm labour at least ten weeks each year, one wife worked part-time year round and another wife worked full-time.

With the instability of grain prices and interest rates these farmers have kept their debt loads low by minimizing farm inputs, particularly in the areas of fertilizer and herbicides, in an attempt to minimize potential losses in a poor crop year. Traditional summerfallow techniques are commonly used; up to half the crop land is left bare for a season and worked several times in the course of the growing year to

uproot any weeds and 'seal' the land to preserve ground moisture. In dry years soil erosion has been a problem; four of the conservative farmers interviewed have reduced the number of times they work their land and two of these leave stubble on some fields for the winter. Two others who have fields particularly susceptible to erosion have planted hay. Although yields may be lower than they would be if fertilizer and herbicides were used more extensively, the hope is that with less cash out-flow, in any given crop year there will be enough profit to cover expenses and provide enough income to live on. These households also tended to rely heavily for a portion of their food on subsistence production, either their own or from other family members, in the form of cows, pigs, chickens or turkeys, garden vegetables, or wild game. Eight out of the nine conservative households interviewed kept extensive kitchen gardens. Five out of the nine kept domestic animals for their own consumption and for redistribution to other family members. In three cases (two of which were retirees) where domestic animals were not kept these households received domestic meat from one or more family members. Three depended on wild game and again this was redistributed to other family members. From among this group of farmers came both of the councilors for the research area at the time of my research, and six of the eight elected members of the Recreation Committee.

**Retired conservative farmers - Ivan and Anna Dmytriw**

Ivan came to Canada from the Ukraine in 1911 with his parents and four sisters. Ivan's father and his cousin split the down payment on a quarter section of land (\$80 each) and started breaking the ground

cutting the poplar trees to sell to farmers to the south as firewood. "The men would cut trees and break land, I would pick roots and stones, maybe help with the horses, whatever. Later when I was a bigger boy, stronger, I cut wood too". In 1912 Ivan's father bought a homestead near the Ukrainian settlement of Horod, seven miles north of Elphinstone, and the family moved to their new farm. The children were then able to attend the Ukrainian school in Horod during the winter while continuing to help with the farm full time during the summer. Ivan completed up to the sixth grade in school.

Ivan married Sophie, a neighbour's daughter, in 1925. They were given 160 acres of land and two cows with calves by Ivan's father-in-law to add to the six cows he already owned. He says that "Although we were trying to get ourselves established, our parents continued to treat us like little children. My father was boss in the field and mother was boss in the house, but we were young and could take anything. When we went to my father-in-law's house there was always talk that we shouldn't stay in those hills, especially by my mother-in-law, but we didn't say anything, just let them talk". Ivan and his family lived with Ivan's parents in a two room house until their third son was expected. In 1930 they built their own house on their land and purchased another 160 acres with money borrowed from Ivan's father-in-law.

Ivan and his brother-in-law cut and planed wood several winters at the Clear Lake sawmill both for their own use and for sale. Gradually Ivan established himself, building a chicken house, barns, an implement shed, granaries and a blacksmith shop. They made their own rope from string,

and tanned their own hides for making harnesses and shoes, "we had almost everything we needed, except money".

In 1943 Ivan borrowed money from his brother-in-law and bought a half section of land south of Elphinstone. In 1944 he moved his family, including his widowed mother, to the south farm and planted the north farm with hay for pasture. Ivan has eight children, seven sons and one daughter by his first wife Sophie. Despite Ivan's efforts to buy land or businesses to keep all of his sons in the area, only the two sons who took over the farming operation still live in the area. Ivan continues to work on his sons' farms during peak seasons.

Sophie died in 1966. Ivan was married again in 1969 to a woman from his church who died a year after their marriage. In his autobiography, Ivan says that he was tired of eating out of tin cans again, so he decided to get married to Anna. In 1972 Ivan and Anna were married in a small ceremony at Anna's church in Oakburn. Ivan is 86 years old and has been married for fifteen years to his third wife Anna, also 86 years old. Ivan likes to tease Anna saying "fifteen years and no kids yet, maybe I should get a new wife!" Anna says "You're a crazy old man, between us we have fifteen children, what would you want with more? You're crazy". Ivan and Anna live in a small house in the town of Elphinstone. On the wall in the kitchen Ivan proudly displays a picture of the house in the Ukraine in which he was born. An entire wall in the living room displays photographs of five generations of Ivan's family as well as some more recent pictures of Anna's family.

Ivan and Anna's social life centers around a very large extended family and former residents or neighbours from the village of Horod. In

the past Ivan and Anna have travelled by car to visit relatives and friends in southern Ontario, Michigan, Florida, Washington State and numerous towns throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, stopping all along the way to visit old friends and relatives. Two or three days a week, particularly in the summer, Ivan and Anna have guests for dinner (the noon meal) which, for the times I was present, always included drinks, Ukrainian songs and music. During the course of my research Ivan and Anna were visited by all of Ivan's children and their families, two of Anna's children, Anna's granddaughter and grandson-in-law with their child, Anna's cousin from Winnipeg with his wife and another couple on their way to the Dauphin Ukrainian festival, former residents of Horod who were related to Ivan's first wife Sophie, as well as others.

Ivan goes down to the general store once or twice a day to pick up one or two items and socialize at the front counter. For Ivan it is a chance to find out what is happening around town and to smoke his pipe, which Anna won't allow him to smoke in the house. Ivan and Anna do most of their shopping in town. Occasionally they travel to either Sandy Lake or Oakburn to obtain goods not available in town. In addition to this, they admitted that they liked to go shopping while visiting friends and relatives in Brandon or Winnipeg.

Most days Ivan spends some time in his garage workshop where he builds various wood crafts, many of which are given as gifts to relatives and special visitors. Anna spends most of her time working in the house and talking to relatives and friends on the phone. Besides cooking for themselves or for guests, Anna does many crafts for their

own household and as gifts. In the summer Ivan and Anna tend their two gardens, one behind their house in town and the other at Ivan's son's farm just outside of town. In the fall enough vegetables are stored, canned or frozen to last most of the winter. Any surplus of vegetables is given away to friends and family when they visit. While Ivan and Anna depend on a small pension income and subsistence produce to supply most of their needs, when unexpected needs arise they turn to their family. Their children have bought them a new car, a washing machine, a television set, and various power tools.

Ivan and Anna both attend the local Ukrainian Catholic Church when mass is held in town, usually once a month. When mass is not held in Elphinstone they attend the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Anna's hometown of Oakburn ten miles away.

In this case study the emphasis on maintaining ties with the families of early residents of the area as well as extended kin is significant. The initial Ukrainian residents were primarily young families with few extended kin ties in the area. Strong ties were formed between neighbours for mutual support and these were in many cases reinforced through intermarriage in the then isolated Ukrainian settlement. While still significant, the economic aspect of these extended ties has decreased. The continued effort expended to maintain these ties suggests an associated symbolic or status value and could be considered an investment in social capital which may be called on in times of need, similar to what has been suggested by Bourdieu (1983) and LiPuma and Melzoff (1989). The continued involvement in farming, attempts to get younger generation established and keep them in the area, and retiring

in the village parallels the "priority of continuity as a family goal" (Salamon 1987:177) and close ties between country and village that has been indicated for German Catholic "yeoman" farmers in central Illinois (Salamon 1987:171).

**Established conservative farmer - Walter Dmytriw**

"This is a good place to live, I wouldn't want to go someplace else" says Walter of his life in Elphinstone. "There's always things to do, work, I could visit, there's the July First picnic, I could go fishing, snowmobiling in the winter... people in the city don't have stuff like that". Walter, the second of eight children, was born in 1928 in his paternal grandparents' house north of Elphinstone where his parents, both of whom emigrated from the Ukraine as children, lived for several years after their marriage before moving to their own farm. When Walter's paternal grandfather died the older boys would take turns staying with their grandmother on her farm. Walter attended Ukrainian school in Horod as a boy but never went to high school. "It wasn't that easy for my dad to send us kids to school, it costed money. For Harry [the oldest brother] to go to high school he had to pay room and board in Elphinstone. It was different for the younger ones, by then we bought the south farm and they could walk to town [Elphinstone] to go to school".

When Walter was sixteen he left home for the first time to work at a lumber camp in northern Ontario. He did odd jobs for the winter and returned home in the spring to work on his family's farm. In the 1950's Walter went into an adult education program to get high school

equivalency and went on to complete a Diploma of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba. "I liked farming and I wanted to know more. This guy from the elevator (Manitoba Co-op) used to come to town for meetings to talk about new seeds or sprays and different ways to do things. It was that guy that told me about the university so I got some information and then I went". After completing his diploma Walter was a 4-H leader in the Elphinstone area, continuing to farm and live with his parents until 1966 when they retired and moved to town. Walter and one of his brothers each inherited 640 acres of land and Walter now rents an additional 320 acres from his full-time hired man. In 1968 Walter purchased a garage and a three room house in town. Walter owned the garage for eight years and hoped that his youngest brother who was working for him as a mechanic would eventually take over the business. When the brother decided to move to Brandon to work there, Walter sold the garage and equipment and made some investments in farm land near Winnipeg which he sold several years later. Walter claims that the profit from the sale of this land is now his primary source of income.

Walter grows both wheat and barley on his farm. He has an average of 380 acres of land in crop each year, about half of all his broken land, with the rest in summerfallow. Walter uses herbicides on his crops, but since grain prices have been down he has chosen to reduce his costs by limiting the use of herbicides. "The less I put in the less I have to lose. This year I'm going to spend \$20 per acre spraying to get rid of wild oats and millet; those are the two worst ones. Some guys, you know, they spend \$60 dollars. You see it's like this, if wheat is up around \$4 a bushel and I get a good yield, you know somewhere around

forty bushels per acre, then I make money. If wheat is down around \$2 or \$3 or there's a bad yield, say 20 bushels, then maybe I can break even." As well, Walter rarely insures his crops against yield losses due to hail or drought although his hired man insures his own land to protect his interests in their crop share agreement. Walter says he doesn't really need a hired man to run his farm, but having him around allows Walter to do other things besides farming. "I keep him on full time so he's there when I need him. I give him a truck to drive and put farm gas in it so he can always make it to work.... and I pay him well.... A good man is hard to find". Walter is unsure about what he will do with the farm when he retires. Having no children, he says he may rent the land and eventually leave it to his brother's son who is currently farming in the area.

In addition to growing crops Walter also stocks a lake on his land with rainbow trout. Walter does not sell these fish, but freezes some for the winter and gives the bulk of them away to friends and relatives and several times in the summer has fish fries at his lake, entertaining members of the Recreation Committee or visiting relatives. In the summer, Walter picks saskatoon berries at his farm to take to his parents. Walter also keeps a small garden at his farm next to his parents' garden and waters both gardens during the summer. Walter's parents regularly give him vegetables and prepared food when he visits.

Walter starts most days with coffee at the hotel coffee shop when he goes to town to pick up his mail. Several times a week he goes to his parents' house in town for dinner (the noon meal) or supper, as well as going for Sunday supper when there are normally relatives visiting.

Although Walter would rather not go to his parents' house sometimes, he says, "They're old and they need me to help with this or that... they get lonely too".

Walter has served three terms on the municipal council and for ten years he has been president of the Recreation Committee in town. Walter is frustrated by what he sees as a lack of involvement by some people in the community; "I can understand some of these young guys are having a tough time [farming] and they're busy, but they've got kids in this town and they should be supporting the community. It's their kids that use the rink, those guys should be helping too"!

In his position as Recreation Committee president, Walter was responsible for applying for grants used to employ two young Ukrainian farmers part time at the rink during the winter. Walter commented that it was a good thing they were able to obtain the grants; "these guys have families to support and a little extra money helps out".

Walter has been the treasurer of the Ukrainian Catholic Church for over 20 years and is also a member of the local Lions club, having served one year as the president.

Important points to note in this case study are the approach to farming as a way of life and the high level of involvement and commitment to the community. Salamon's (1987) "yeoman" farmers exhibited similar characteristics which she found to be associated with community solidarity. Although a high level of education and economic prosperity uncharacteristic of conservative strategies have been achieved, the commitment to family obligations, the community, and a low investment farming strategy remain strong. This commitment to a

relatively low investment farming strategy, even though economic constraints to new technologies and techniques are not limitations, parallels Cancian's (1985:75) findings of a pattern of upper middle class conservatism in a diverse sample of agricultural populations. The conflicts experienced and expressed by this individual are in part a result of his uncharacteristic combination of attributes and consequent ambiguous position in the local stratification system (discussed in Chapter Four).

#### **Young conservative farmers - Tommy and Elsie Krawchuck**

Tommy is the third born of five children in his family and the eldest of two sons. Both of Tommy's parents were born in the area and raised in Ukrainian speaking families. He has been farming all his life; because his father was ill, he took over the primary responsibilities of operating his father's farm upon graduating from high school. When his father died, the land, one half section, was left to Tommy's mother. All three of Tommy's sisters were married and living in nearby areas. At the time of research Tommy and his younger brother were operating the farm for their mother. Tommy was also renting a section of land owned by his mother's two brothers. The rental agreement was quite informal; after expenses were paid, the profit from the crop was split three ways with one share going to each of the uncles and one to Tommy. Because neither of his uncles had any children, Tommy expected to eventually inherit this land. Tommy's brother Bill had worked several years at a construction job in nearby Onanole in order to buy a half section of land from his father's cousin. In addition to this, Bill and his wife

were given two quarter sections of land as a wedding present from his wife's family.

Tommy and his wife Elsie were married in 1980 and live in a converted school with their three children, less than a quarter mile from Tommy's mother's house north of Elphinstone. Tommy cuts wood on his uncles' land to be used as heating fuel for himself and his mother.

Each year Tommy puts half his land in crop, usually spring wheat and barley, with the rest being in summerfallow. He occasionally sprays his crops for weeds but says "it depends on the year, if the weeds are bad and if we have the money at that particular time". Tommy owns his own older model tractor and haying equipment as well as a cultivator and an old grain truck; jointly with his brother he owns a pull type combine, a newer self propelled combine, seeding equipment and spraying equipment. "It's a lot of moving equipment back and forth at harvest but we get it all done... It depends what field is ready first, we swath that and then combine later, it depends, sometimes it's just right and we can do one right after the other... with the amount of crop that we have and the cost of equipment these days I couldn't afford to do it by myself; this way neither one of us has to go into debt". Tommy's informal machinery sharing arrangement with his brother is facilitated by their labour sharing arrangement during seeding and harvest.

For several years Tommy had been working for the same construction company as his brother. This money helped to repair and replace some farm machinery, as well as to renovate his house. Tommy and Elsie keep a large garden jointly with Tommy's mother who does much of the canning and freezing of vegetables. They also eat most of their meals at the

mother's house. As well, they kept about twenty chickens and three cows for their own consumption and in the summer, Tommy's mother and her two daughters-in-law spend several days picking saskatoons which they either preserve or freeze for later use. In addition to this, Tommy and his brother frequently hunt for large game, usually deer or elk, in the late fall and early winter. This meat is used by their own families, their mother, and at various times is distributed to their sisters' families, their uncles and aunts, and some cousins' families. Meat is also given to the person on whose land the animal was shot, "The guy who shoots it first gets his choice of the deer, the other guy gets the rest. I usually give a couple of good steaks to whose ever land it is, for letting us hunt there". They usually hunt on an uncle's farm which borders on the National Park. During the winter it was estimated that they would eat wild meat two or three times a week. The meat is mostly kept in a freezer in the porch at Tommy's mothers house.

In 1985 Tommy, Elsie and several of Tommy's relatives including his mother and his brother and sister-in-law, became involved with the Calvary Temple congregation in Elphinstone. They attend church services at the old elementary school each week. Tommy regularly visits with neighbouring farmers and at least once a week they go to visit Elsie's family ten miles to the east. Tommy is a member of the local Lions club in Elphinstone and volunteers to help at various Recreation Committee events including the July First picnic.

This case study highlights the economic importance of extended family ties that provide access to farm land, machinery, and labour, and form an important unit for production and redistribution of subsistence

goods. The high level of interdependence between households and dependence on subsistence food sources can be seen as resulting from an extremely low farm income and a preference to depend as little as possible on wage labour. Wage labour is entered into for the explicit reason of supporting the farming enterprise as was also found by Salamon (1987:184) among German "yeoman" farmers in central Illinois.

#### **Small Business Owners/Pre-farmers - Harry and Lorraine Melnyk**

Harry is 23 years old and grew up on his family's farm just east of Elphinstone. After graduating from high school he helped his parents with their 3/4 section mixed farming operation east of Elphinstone. Harry's older sister went to Brandon after high school to take a community college course and is presently living in Brandon working as a librarian. Both Harry and his wife Lorraine come from Ukrainian families. Lorraine grew up on a farm north of Elphinstone in the Horod district near the park border where her parents and two younger brothers still farm. Lorraine's sister Carrie married Harry's brother Rick and they are living in Sandy Lake where Rick is the grain buyer at the elevator. Both Lorraine and Carrie had wanted to move to Winnipeg to continue their education after their graduation from high school but were discouraged from doing so by their parents. "My parents were afraid that we'd get into trouble". They both obtained jobs in nearby towns and got married a year later.

After Harry's marriage to Lorraine in 1985, his parents decided to purchase the garage in town for him to operate. "My folks are going to be farming for maybe another ten years so at least with the garage we

don't have to go away". Harry sells gasoline and other car products as well as doing minor car repairs and body work, although he has no formal training. Lorraine continues to work as a store clerk in nearby Erickson and, with the two incomes, they hope eventually be able to purchase land near Harry's parent's farm as it becomes available. Harry and Lorraine are currently living in a rented house in town where they keep a small garden. A few days a week they go to Harry's parent's house for supper and then help with the evening chores of milking cows and cleaning the barn. On weekends they visit with Lorraine's family and Lorraine occasionally helps with her parent's extensive kitchen garden. Harry and Lorraine receive vegetables and domestic meat from both families in the fall.

Harry and Lorraine are involved in several community activities. Harry plays softball with the Elphinstone team and for the previous few years has bartended at various Recreation Committee events. Lorraine has been treasurer of the Recreation Committee for two years and for several years has worked as a food committee volunteer for the July First celebrations. They both participate in curling at the town rink. Lorraine goes to bingo on Wednesday evenings with her mother, aunt and sister. Lorraine and Harry do not participate in any church congregations, although they were married in the Ukrainian Catholic Church in town.

It is important to notice here that both families made a concerted effort to keep their adult children in the area and helped them set up new households. Similar efforts have been noted by Salamon (1987:177) among German farmers in central Illinois. The younger generation also

contributes a substantial amount of labour to their parents' household and in turn receives subsistence products. The marriage of brothers to sisters has concentrated the existing kin ties and established a strong and reliable network of relations in the community which is a pattern characteristic of extended-kin familism (Heller and Quesada 1977:224). Involvement in wage labour and business ownership are considered temporary activities which will eventually lead to full time farming. Salamon (1987:184) has also indicated that within her sample of small scale ethnic German farmers, wage labour was engaged in to meet the capital requirements of farming and was terminated when these economic objectives were achieved.

### 3.3.2 Entrepreneurial strategies

These strategies rely on the ability to expand operations and increase production in order to remain profitable. This strategy is predominant among the Anglo farmers who are concentrated in the southern- most part of the research area. Particularly among younger farmers just getting established, this strategy was characterized by high debt loads incurred either through the initial establishment of farm operations or through the replacement of dated farm machinery. There has been an apparent commitment from this group of farmers to the use of more modern farming techniques and machinery. All five of the entrepreneurial farmers formally interviewed had purchased new tractors and combines within the previous six years and had been strong advocates of minimum tillage, continuous cropping and other soil conservation techniques for several years. The two younger farmers who had parents

still in farming were both hoping to buy out their parents' farms; in the meantime they had bought some land and were renting additional land in order to maintain a viable farming operation. The four entrepreneurial farmers who were renting land expressed a strong desire to buy the land they were renting if they could afford to and if the owner were willing to sell. Of the five entrepreneurial households involved in farming, one husband was working for the municipality and four of the farm wives were involved in off-farm labour for some part of the year. Retired entrepreneurial farmers, particularly if they had family living outside of the area, tended to sell or rent out the farm and move away. One such couple whom I was able to interview during their visit to Elphinstone had five grown children living in Alberta. Upon retiring, they rented their farm to a neighbour, purchased a house in Alberta, and returned to stay at their farm house for vacations only. Another older couple expressed a desire to move to Brandon and "just take it easy". The entrepreneurial households interviewed were characterized by higher levels of education. Two farmers from the group interviewed had a Diploma of Agriculture and one had a Degree of Agriculture. Of the farm wives, only two of the five were originally from the area, and four had university degrees. Related to this higher level of education is the encouragement of adult children to migrate to obtain an education and better job opportunities. As a result, entrepreneurial households tended to have few family members in the area, small local social networks, and they participated only marginally in local activities such as the Recreation Committee, the Lions Club or

local politics. Three of these farmers, however, participated in regional farm organizations and four were on the local elevator board.

**Semi-retired entrepreneurial farmers - Vince and Irene McKay**

Vince, aged 63, has lived on his family farm since the age of seven. Vince's father, a widower with three small children, sold his business in Kelwood located east of the National Park, moved to the Elphinstone area and bought a section of land in 1930. Vince's uncle was a lawyer and teacher in the town of Strathclair at the time. Vince attended the school in Elphinstone up until the age of 16. He had just completed grade nine when his father died in 1939, and Vince took over the day-to-day operation of the farm with his elder sister and younger brother. Vince farmed with his brother for several years, eventually buying out his brother's share. In 1955 Vince married Irene. Irene grew up in Winnipeg and came to Elphinstone as a school teacher. She continued her career and held the position of principal of the elementary school for seventeen years before she retired in 1980. Vince and Irene have three children, one son and two daughters. All the children finished high school in Elphinstone and went on to university. Dick completed a diploma in Agriculture and now works with his father. One daughter is a teacher in Brandon and the other daughter is a nurse working in the Northwest Territories. Irene makes extended visits to her daughters several times a year.

Vince and Irene own one and a half sections of land (960 acres) just south of the town of Elphinstone on which they grow wheat, barley and canola both for the seed business and for sale at the elevator. Irene

has never been involved in the day-to-day operations of the farm although she and Vince do discuss major purchases and investments between themselves. Vince and Irene have no farm debts and after retirement they plan to rent their farm to their son until he is able to buy it. Vince and Irene co-signed a loan for their son, but because of the high debt load their son is currently carrying, Vince is hesitant to turn the farm operation over completely. "I want to stick around and make sure things go the way they should".

Since Irene's retirement, they have gone away each winter. The first winter they travelled through western Europe and since then they have been going to the southern United States trying to decide upon a permanent winter home. During the summer, Vince and Irene live in a newer house trailer next to their son's new house. They plan to buy a home in Brandon when they retire completely from farming.

Vince and Irene were both involved with the Presbyterian Church in town until it closed in 1980. Although neither one has ever held positions on the Recreation Committee, they have always been volunteers, especially at the rink when their children were young. Recently they have been involved with preparations leading up to the annual July First celebrations. Vince is a member of the Lions Club and in the past has been on the board of the local Manitoba Pool Elevator.

This case study exemplifies two characteristics common among entrepreneurial households -- high level of education achieved by the younger generation, and the tendency to relocate outside of the area upon retirement. Salamon (1987:173) has suggested that among entrepreneurial Anglo farmers in central Illinois the tendency to leave

the community upon retirement from farming reflects low involvement in community affairs and more dispersed social networks. In this Elphinstone case the operation of the seed growing business indicates a higher level of expertise and a profit oriented approach to farming.

**Young entrepreneurial farmers - Dick and Donna McKay**

Dick grew up in an Anglo family and has lived most of his life on his family's farm. Dick and his wife Donna, both in their mid-thirties, were married in 1983 and now live on Dick's parents' farm south of Elphinstone. Dick went to university, receiving his diploma of agriculture in 1975 after which he worked for two years in the mines at Thompson, Manitoba. After returning to town Dick farmed and helped out with his father's seed business and obtained bank loans to buy land adjacent to his parents' as it became available. Dick admitted that several years ago he had considered leaving farming; "Sometimes I feel like I'm just spinning my wheels, but here at least I'm my own boss".

Donna is originally from Winnipeg where she worked for Agriculture Canada. Dick and Donna were married in Winnipeg after which she quit her job and moved to Elphinstone. She initially held a job with Agriculture Canada in Brandon but found the sixty mile drive to and from Brandon too difficult during the winter months and found it necessary to quit. Over the past few years Donna has worked seasonally, from April to October, at the entrance gate to the National Park, collecting unemployment insurance in the winter months. Donna is not involved in either the planning or day-to-day operations of the farm or seed business.

Dick and Donna built a new house in 1985 and now share a yard with Dick's parents. They recently had two hired men doing landscaping around the new house. Dick explained that, "if people see that I'm doing well, they'll trust me and maybe they'll take my advice and grow new crops and that's good for my business". Dick employs one full time hired man and another occasionally as well as having someone look after their kitchen garden and another person to clean house once a week.

Dick has now taken over the day-to-day operations of the seed growing business and now owns a section of land (640 acres) adjacent to his father's land. Dick's farming style is best characterized as capital intensive and 'high-tech'. Dick expresses a concern for environmental protection and feels that his use of minimum tillage methods and continuous cropping is crucial in protecting his land, its future productive potential and thus its value. Dick also uses relatively large amounts of herbicides and fertilizers but insists that when used properly these pose no threat to the environment or his family's health. Presently, despite an already high debt load, Dick would like to buy or lease more land but has been unable to convince his neighbour to rent or sell an adjacent quarter section of land. Dick is very concerned about keeping his machinery and farm vehicles up to date explaining, "you see these guys that have the same combine for ten years; they spend all their time repairing and you never know when it's going to break down. When you need to combine, it has to be done right away or you lose money on the grade. I get a new combine every five years; it's still under warranty if something does go wrong... usually these other guys are after me to do custom work for them because theirs needs repairs". With

the recent announcement of plans to close the local grain elevator, Dick has begun looking to buy a large grain truck to do custom hauling for those whose trucks will not be able to make the extra twelve to fourteen mile trip each way to haul their own grain to more distant elevators.

Dick is currently a member of the local elevator board as well as regularly attending meetings of the Manitoba Seed Growers Association. "I like to keep up to date on what's going on". Dick and Donna both participate occasionally in community events and activities. Dick has been a member of the Lions Club since it was formed. Both Dick and Donna volunteer some time to help with the July First celebrations and other community functions. "We give money usually too. It looks good if you're in business here to be giving something back". Because Donna is working during the summer and Dick spends much of his time supervising their hired labour and running the farm office, they do not have much time to spare for community activities. Donna is involved with a theatrical club which has started up in the town of Strathclair. Most days Dick goes to the hotel for coffee in the morning, and dinner at noon. Aside from this, Dick and Donna do not regularly socialize with people from the Elphinstone area. Donna admits that she feels somewhat isolated living in Elphinstone. She looks forward to the winter when they can travel to visit friends and relatives in Winnipeg and elsewhere. Each year they take a winter vacation for a month or more and visit Dick's parents who spend their winters in the southern United States.

This case study documents a strong business-oriented approach to farming which relies on high levels of investment and hired labour.

There are few relatives in the area with whom even social ties are maintained, and marriage outside of the area has dispersed kin ties. Aside from Dick's parents who co-signed a loan for him, no other households are involved in this farm operation. Even though Dick and his father run the seed business jointly, their fields are kept separate. Participation in some community activities is maintained as a means of promoting the seed business. Involvement in the elevator board and seed growers association is significant as these are farm business oriented activities. The contribution of seasonal wage labour to the household income is viewed as a preferable situation because of its ability to increase their standard of living. In this case, wage labour is not at the expense of either family ties or contribution to farm labour.

#### **Entrepreneurial Business Owners - Garnet and Kathy Finney**

Garnet was born and raised south of Elphinstone on his family's farm and he attended school in town. Although Garnet grew up in the area, he no longer has any immediate family living there. Like most of the business people in town in the recent past, Garnet spent a period of several years working outside of the area before he returned and started up a business. Garnet trained as a welder in the early 1970's and then worked for an oil company in northern Alberta for five years. When he returned he had enough money to open up a welding shop with a friend who owns a small farm but rents the land to a brother. Kathy grew up on a farm near a town 12 miles to the south where she lived with her family until graduating from high school. Her parents and one brother still

run a hog operation. After graduating from high school, she managed the hotel bar in a nearby town. Garnet and Kathy were married on Kathy's parents' farm in 1980. When Kathy and Garnet were engaged to be married, Kathy moved to Elphinstone and began working at the general store in town which she continued to do until 1986. Kathy does the accounting for the welding shop and, at the time of research, was taking a bookkeeping course by correspondence. When she completes her bookkeeping course Kathy hopes to be able to obtain full time employment. As well, she works for the municipality doing homecare for four elderly people in town about 8 hours per week and occasionally works as a waitress in the pub. Garnet's welding business has been doing very well recently in spite of economic decline in the area. Garnet explains that more and more farmers are repairing broken parts because it is too costly to replace them. Garnet's purchase of a mobile welding unit has proven to be a good investment, "Especially at seeding or combining I get calls out to the field to fix a hitch, a shaft, a pin, you name it". Garnet also owns and operates a back-hoe. Last fall Garnet and Kathy purchased a snow plough blade for the front of the welding truck so they can do snow ploughing for people in the area.

Garnet and Kathy own five acres of land just outside of town and are planning to build a house. At present, they are living in an old trailer and have a large kitchen garden from which they freeze the bulk of their winter vegetables. They raise chickens and pigs for meat. On summer weekends they camp out and fish at a nearby lake. Many of these are eaten fresh, but some are frozen for the winter. When asked why they stay in the area Kathy says, "We can live cheaper here than we can

anywhere else and we like the outdoors, being able to relax and enjoy life".

Garnet and Kathy primarily associate with a small group of friends from the neighbouring towns of Newdale and Strathclair, and are rarely involved in activities with people from Elphinstone, aside from Garnet's business partner and his wife. Kathy occasionally curls at the Elphinstone arena, and the welding shop donates money to special community events such as the July First picnic. They are not members of any church group, club, or association and neither are they involved in town or municipal politics. Garnet and Kathy patronize the pub in town, associating with the same small group of people mostly from other towns in the area. Garnet and Kathy prefer to go outside of town for most of their shopping and other needs. As Kathy says, "I don't want everyone in the goddamn town knowing what we're doing". Kathy expresses a feeling of isolation living in the town. She says, "You have to be related to half the frigging people in this town before they'll accept you in anything".

The pattern exemplified here -- working outside the area gaining education, skills, and economic capital for a period of years -- is common to the entrepreneurial strategy in both business and farming. The low level of involvement and association with other residents in the area seems to be in part the cause, and in part the effect, of maintaining strong ties to people elsewhere. The sense of isolation which was expressed parallels the experience of entrepreneurial "Yankee" families in central Illinois (Salamon 1987:174).

### 3.3.3 Marginal Strategies

Some individuals or households in the area fall outside of the above classifications and pursue neither local kin-oriented strategies nor entrepreneurial strategies. This group tends to depend heavily on welfare, seasonal work combined with unemployment insurance, or casual employment, and in some cases subsistence activities such as gardening, hunting and fishing. All ethnic groups in the area are represented here, including Anglo, Ukrainian and Metis/Native. For the three households I was able to study, one or more of a variety of factors in combination seemed to contribute to their situation, including extreme eccentricity or mental illness, alcoholism, breakdown of extended family relationships or a lack of family members in the area, little economic capital and no inherited farm land, low level of education, and no formal job skills. In two of these households most of the adult children had managed to improve their situation through marriage or by acquiring an education or skills and permanently leaving the area. The other adult children of these households were following a similar pattern either in Elphinstone or elsewhere.

#### A Marginal Strategy - Edward and Mary Kuzyk

Edward and Mary, aged 54 and 52 respectively, were both born and raised in Ukrainian speaking families in the Elphinstone area. Edward's parents live in Elphinstone and the family farm, located just south of the National Park boundary, is farmed by one of Edward's brothers. All five of Edward's siblings still live in the Elphinstone area. Mary was an only child and her father still lives in Elphinstone. Edward left

school in grade 9 to take a job cutting wood in the National Park. Mary completed grade 11. Edward and Mary were 19 and 17 when they were married. The priest at the Ukrainian Catholic Church refused to marry them because Mary was pregnant, so they were married by the Presbyterian minister. Since that time they have had no involvement in any church in town. Edward and Mary spoke openly of the anger and frustration which surrounded their marriage. They suggested that their families' opposition to the circumstances of their marriage was the reason they had remained outside of community life and rarely associated with relatives who lived in the area, "We're not good enough for them so they don't even want to talk to us".

Edward and Mary live in the same old four room house where they have lived since 1966, on the edge of the town next to the reserve. Their house has no running water, but they have a pump in their yard for household water and haul their drinking water from the town pump located across the street from the post office.

Edward and Mary have been involved in a pattern of seasonal employment, occasional employment, and unemployment insurance, interspersed with periods of living on welfare payments for much of their adult lives. At the time of research they were caretakers of the municipal hall, looking after the lawn and sidewalks as well as cleaning up after the hall has been rented. Mary says she likes that job because she doesn't have to get up early in the morning and can essentially set her own schedule. Before the closure of the high school they drove a school bus (their family car), but the routes have been enlarged and fewer drivers with small vehicles are needed now. For eight years

Edward had a regular seasonal job as a garbage collector during the summer at the town site in the National Park 30 miles away, collecting unemployment insurance benefits in the winter. Edward injured his back five years ago and he now receives a disability pension. Edward and Mary do not keep a garden although they used to have a small one next to their house. Edward occasionally hunts ducks in the fall with a few of his friends, but because they have no freezer and cannot store meat for the winter, this does not make a substantial contribution to their diet.

Edward and Mary have five grown children. The eldest son resides permanently in the area and follows a similar pattern of occasional and seasonal employment. The others have all pursued work and education elsewhere; one son works as a chiropractor in Toronto, another son took a community college course and now works in Winnipeg as a butcher, the only daughter is a child care worker. The daughter was staying in Elphinstone at the time of research, but intended to return to Winnipeg to look for work in the fall. The youngest son works for the CN railway and is based in Winnipeg, although at the time of my research he had been temporarily laid off and was living with his parents in Elphinstone. While working in Winnipeg the three youngest children had been sharing an apartment.

Neither Edward nor Mary participate in events involving the Recreation Committee or any of the churches and neither do they normally have guests in their home. Edward occasionally goes out drinking with men of similar age who pursue the same pattern of employment involving seasonal or occasional unskilled labour and various transfer payments. Common places to drink are the hotel and the houses of two old bachelors

who live in town. Mary plays bingo at the municipal hall most Wednesdays and goes for coffee at the hotel several times a week with a regular group of three women. Edward and Mary intend to continue working at part time jobs and hope to get the caretaking job at the elementary school if it becomes available.

In this case it is important to note that the breakdown of extended family ties has severely disadvantaged this household. Without formal skills or education mobility is limited and the lack of access to a kin network for support has further limited their opportunities locally. The movement of their adult children out of the area was viewed as necessary in order to improve their situation. "There's nothing to keep young people around here".

The sample of case studies presented in this chapter is only intended to reflect the broad differences which were apparent within the local population of Elphinstone. The entrepreneurial strategies rely primarily on capital investment and higher levels of production to increase profit. Conservative strategies have limited capital investment and support households through the combination of farm production, wage labour, subsistence production, and redistribution between inter-related households of extended kin. The marginal strategies are essentially the default where the other strategies are unattainable. In the following chapter I will discuss the features of these strategies more fully as they relate to both micro and macro processes.

## Chapter 4

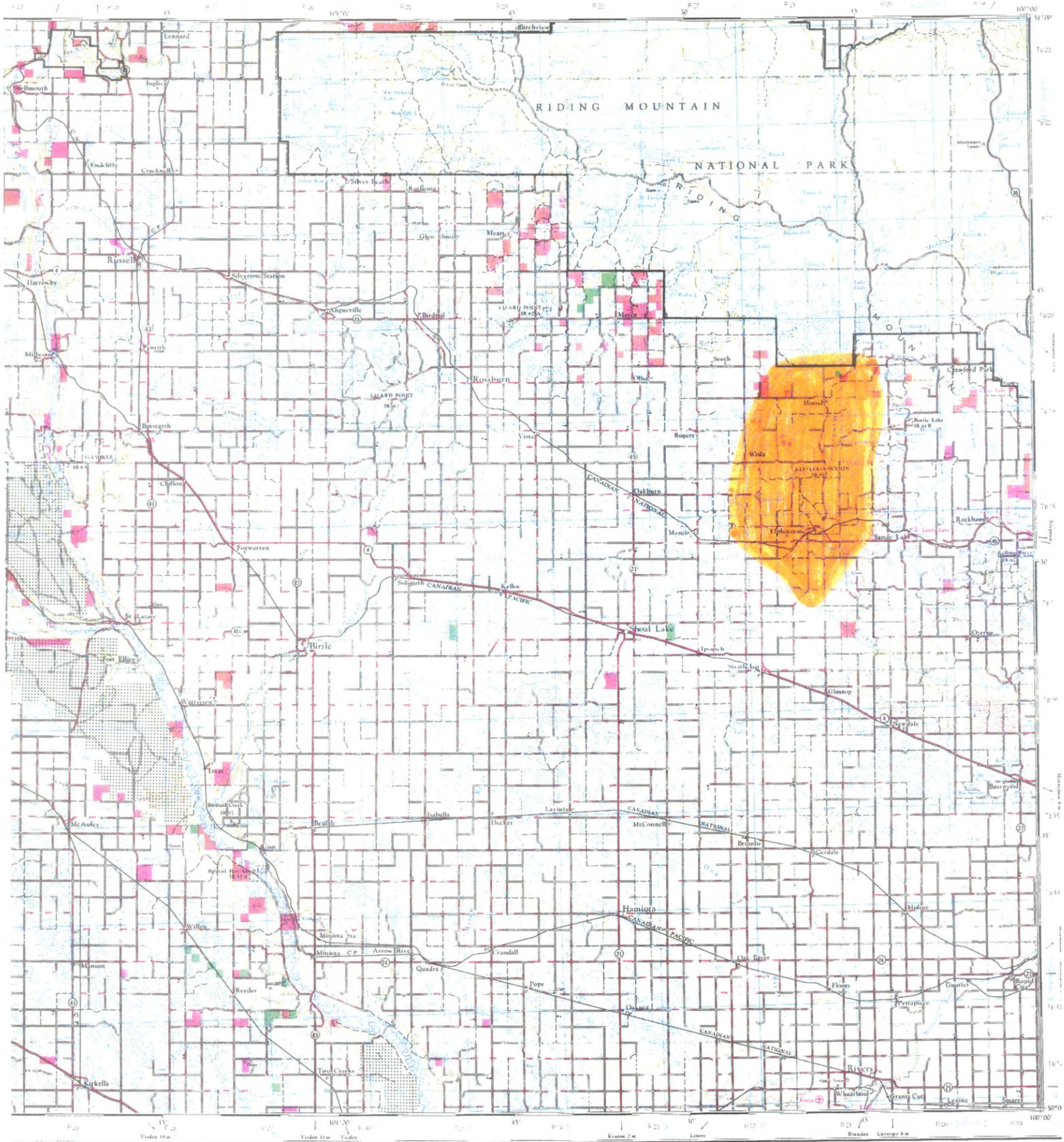
### STRATIFICATION IN THE LOCAL SYSTEM

Understanding the economic and social strategies being employed at the local level requires the definition and elaboration of the local system in which these strategies have emerged. To begin with, the limits of this system must be defined to reasonably determine the boundaries. As Cancian (1985) has demonstrated, the correct definition of the boundaries of the local system is crucial to the interpretation of data on local forms of stratification. Upon defining the local system boundaries, I will examine the influence of ethnic differentiation on the local system particularly regarding the different forms of familism exhibited among the Ukrainian and Anglo groups. The differences in forms of familism will be shown to be central features distinguishing the conservative and entrepreneurial strategies. I will go on to demonstrate the nature of conflict resulting from the articulation of kin, community and class relations that is experienced by people pursuing these strategies. The aim of this part of the discussion is to demonstrate the ongoing nature of this articulation despite thorough incorporation into and dependence upon the institutional structure and economy of the Canadian society. It is precisely this type of articulation that is the focus of LiPuma and Meltzoff's (1989) reconceptualization of culture and class, making discussions of uniquely local systems (which are so central to the ethnographic endeavor),

meaningful in the broader context of social class and society. The criteria used locally to differentiate individuals and families are discussed to elucidate the local stratification system, and incongruities in this system are suggested to be indicators of social change. Following from this, I will show that the different strategies presented in Chapter Three represent different levels of capital which have been interpreted and given social meaning within the local stratification system. To conclude this discussion I will suggest the possible direction of change within the local system in light of the incongruities which have been found and the operation of economic, social and cultural capital.

#### **4.1 Defining the Local System - The Community of Reference**

For the purposes of this research the local system includes those individuals and households whose spheres of movement, social connections and need satisfaction focus primarily on the village of Elphinstone. It is among this group that regular face-to-face interactions occur; thus this group becomes a primary point of reference in the day-to-day process of self-definition of its members, as was similarly suggested by Cancian (1979:35-36). Following from Bennett's (1985:36) concept of spheres to demarcate the geographical and social space included in the local community, I looked at such factors as where people live, work, collect their mail, do their shopping, and socialize, as well as whether they married within or outside of the local system. Jurisdictional boundaries such as municipalities and school divisions influence but do not define the geographic limits of the local system. Due to the situation of economic decline, many commodities and services once available in the



A GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY OF REFERENCE  
ELPHINSTONE, MANITOBA 1987

Map 3

(Adapted from Energy, Mines and Resources Map 62 K, Series A502, 1964)

village of Elphinstone must now be obtained elsewhere, so that the spheres of movement have increased in geographic size. These ties to other towns and villages, however, tend to be single-stranded; people travel to one place to buy clothing, another for medical care, and yet another to do their banking, but continue to live, work, collect their mail, and socialize in the community of Elphinstone. Practically speaking then, the limits of the local system may be defined by the area in which individuals and households reside relatively closer to Elphinstone than to neighboring towns or villages and maintain multi-stranded ties to the village of Elphinstone. As I will discuss in the next section, the strength and permanence of ties to the area vary significantly between the Ukrainian and Anglo ethnic groups.

#### 4.2 The Influence of Ethnicity

The two main groups upon whom this research was based -- Ukrainian and Anglo -- differ in behavioural and attitudinal characteristics, the extent to which extended kin ties were maintained, and the rights and obligations associated with these kin ties. Todd and Brierly (1977:237) have pointed out that "variation in behaviour stemming from cultural differences has long been noted as a possible key influence on attitudes towards economic development". Statistical analysis of rural Manitoba ethnic group characteristics associates the British (Anglo) group with above average education and the key occupations of wheat farming, public administration and defense (Todd and Brierly 1977:245). The Slavonic group (Ukrainian and Polish) shows low levels of education and involvement in poor farming and manual occupations (Todd and Brierly 1977:248). While Todd and

Brierly do not offer an explanation for these results, I postulate that the differences which exist between these two ethnic groups are in part related to the different forms of familism which they exhibit.

Heller and Quesada (1977) have suggested two distinct forms of rural familism -- "extended-kin-oriented" and "primary-kin-oriented". In extended-kin familism the "extended kin relationships form the basis of emotional and physical support" (Heller and Quesada 1977:223). Behavioural and attitudinal characteristics associated with extended-kin familism are a negative view of geographic mobility, strong emotional attachments to secondary kin, obligatory extended-kin role commitments, and a high incidence of marriage among extended kin (Heller and Quesada 1977:224). These characteristics of extended-kin familism were found among the self-defined Ukrainian population of the area. Among this group, keeping the family together and on the land were conscious and frequently stated goals. The extended family included grandparents, parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, and in many cases cousins. These relatives were a main source of access to land, financial support, cooperative labour, mutual support, and socializing. While I did not document a high incidence of marriage between extended kin within this group, I did find within my sample a preference for marriage within the community or other communities in the immediate area. As well, a preference for marriage within the Ukrainian ethnic group was also apparent. The following table indicates the responses for the conservative cases to the question "Where did you live while you were growing up; what city, town, or district"? The responses are broken down

by sex of respondent for eight married couples. Also indicated is how each respondent classified their ethnic background.

Table 7  
Origins and Ethnicity of a Sample of Conservative Married Couples

<u>Husband</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>
Horod	Ukrainian	Oakburn	Ukrainian
Elphinstone	Ukrainian	Horod	Ukrainian
Horod	Ukrainian	Doloney	Ukrainian
Olha	Ukrainian	Horod	Ukrainian
Elphinstone	Ukrainian	Onanole	British
Elphinstone	Ukrainian	Elphinstone	Ukrainian
Elphinstone	Ukrainian	Elphinstone	English
Elphinstone	Ukrainian	Horod	Ukrainian

(The districts of Doloney, Olha, and Horod are former school and church districts which are within twelve miles to the north and north west of the village of Elphinstone)

An additional postulate concerning extended-kin familism was that the creation of an exclusive "we" group leads to the perception of non-kin community interaction as a threat to kin group solidarity and thus a low level of community involvement (Heller and Quesada 1977:224). The strong commitment to community activities among the Ukrainian ethnic group, as was indicated in the case studies in the Elphinstone region, may be related to the perception that such involvement can benefit the extended family group. Municipal councilors are in a position to direct public works such as road building and winter snow ploughing, and have used their position to provide preferential services to relatives. I was informed of at least five cases where past or present councillors directed the repair and reconstruction of roads and ditches to provide better access to their own farms or relatives' farms, as well as one case where a councillor recommended a cousin for municipal welfare payments.

Recreation committee members control the hiring of rink employees and, again, I found evidence that preference is given to family members.

Among the Anglo population of the area the characteristics of primary-kin-oriented familism were apparent. These characteristics include strong emotional attachment and obligatory familial commitments only among primary kin, a positive perception of geographic mobility for better occupational opportunities, and a preference for marriages among non-relatives (Heller and Quesada 1977:224). Where extended family ties were maintained, this was based more on individual qualities rather than the fulfillment of obligations and exercising of rights. Among farmers, land was thought of in terms of individual property. The ability to make a profit by farming, in addition to an individual's interest in doing so, were the main motivations for entering into or continuing farming. This entrepreneurial spirit and a greater emphasis on the individual resulted in a more external orientation and greater geographic mobility for members of this group. Entrepreneurial "Yankee" farmers in central Illinois similarly showed a loose attachment to family land and encouraged their children to explore educational opportunities and non-farming careers (Salamon 1987:176-178). This pattern also concurs with the argument presented by Jane Collins (1986) in which fuller participation in the capitalist economy results in a low emphasis on kin and community ties. Among the eight married couples in my sample of entrepreneurial (Anglo) cases, I found a high incidence of marriage to people from outside the area. In Table 8 below I indicate their responses to the question "Where did you live while you were growing up; in what city, town, or district?",

broken down by sex of respondent. Also indicated are the respondents' classification of their ethnic background.

Table 8  
Origins and Ethnicity of a Sample of Entrepreneurial Married Couples

<u>Husband</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>
Glenforsa	Scottish	Keeseekoowenin	Metis
Elphinstone	Scottish	Winnipeg	British
Elphinstone	Scottish	Winnipeg	Greek
Elphinstone	English	Strathclair	English
Elphinstone	Scottish/Metis	Winnipeg	French-Canadian
Elphinstone	British	Newdale	English
Elphinstone	Scottish	Cardale	English
Elphinstone	English	Newdale	Scottish

Primary-kin familism has also been associated with "participation in community and social affairs as a family unit in order to maintain symbolic worth and to insure that children will interact with other children from families belonging to the same reference group" (Heller and Quesada 1977:224). Among the Anglo population of the research area I have noted a low level of community involvement. The perception among this group is that few personal benefits accrue from community involvement.

These patterns of familism and their impact on behaviours and attitudes parallel Salamon's (1987) findings concerning the differences between the Anglo "Yankee" community and the German "yeoman" community in her research on the ethnic determinants of farm community character. In the discussion below I will indicate how the conflict between kin and capitalist relations, intensified by the high dependence on wage labour, is leading to the weakening of extended kin ties within this group. This conflict has serious implications for the community as a whole.

#### 4.3 The Intersection of Kin, Community, and Class-Based Social Relations

In addition to ethnically based attributes, the local system is also differentiated by class relations characteristic of the society as a whole. The contradiction between goals, expectations, and obligations associated with kin, community and class-based social relations is a source of conflict in the local setting. As I have mentioned in earlier sections, kin relations involve the requirement to provide mutual aid and support to the relevant kin group, to the ultimate end of achieving family goals. The primary goal for the conservative Ukrainian extended-kin group is to maintain the viability of the extended family as a unit of mutual aid, by keeping family members in the area and assisting in the establishment of new farming households. The extended family ensures a large network of kin ties to be relied on for access to farm land, labour exchange, reciprocity of subsistence goods, and in some cases financial assistance.

For this group, entrance into wage labour presents an important contradiction; while wage labour is necessary to support the characteristically small and marginally profitable farming operations, the time spent in wage labour is at a direct cost to fulfillment of family obligations. The limited availability of full time labour opportunities in the region requires that many conservative households maintain involvement in both farming and wage labour since neither by itself can provide a sufficient income. By necessity, kin obligations have narrowed in the range of kin included and the frequency of involvement, in order to accommodate a high dependency on wage labour. It has been similarly found

among the Andean Aymara that integration "into wage and commodity markets reinforces the household unit, while the partial nature of that integration continues to make it impossible for the household to stand alone" (Collins 1986:668). In addition, money earned and items purchased through wage labour take on a different value, having been earned through individual effort as opposed to farm profit and subsistence goods which are generally the result of the labour of several family members.

Although in several instances I observed food being exchanged between family members, store bought food was never included in these exchanges.

One young conservative farmer who was involved in a machinery and labour sharing arrangement with his brother expressed concern that his brother was always borrowing his new pick-up truck. "I worked like crazy all winter and now I can't even use it [the pick-up truck] when I want to".

An established conservative farmer who had lent money to two of his brothers several years ago was annoyed that they had not paid him back, "They think that I don't need it, maybe I don't really, I'm doing ok, but that's not the point". Thus, the range of goods eligible for reciprocal exchange is to some extent defined by participation in wage labour.

Within the conservative strategies in Elphinstone, the kin group continues to organize and deploy the labour of its members in the wage labour situation; whenever possible relatives obtain jobs at the same work place and employers hire members of their family. Entrance into a wage relationship with a relative places a dollar value on labour which in other cases would be offered in reciprocal fashion; consequently, it places a strain on the kin ties. One conservative farmer hired his unemployed brother who had returned to the area for the summer to paint

his house. "I thought I'd just give him something to do and give him a few dollars ... when I came back in the afternoon he was just sitting there drinking my beer. He was just taking advantage. He wouldn't do that if he was working for somebody else". Similar to the Andean peasants discussed by Collins (1986:654), the ethnic Ukrainian population in the research area "are caught between the exigencies of two modes of production, and remain dependent on the social relationships that organize production in each mode". No particular conflict was found to arise from farm land rental arrangements. There was a complex set of relations involved in renting land from family members; in the case study of a young conservative farmer, the uncles' decision to rent the land was in part motivated by the desire to help the young farmer get established. For the young farmer, this arrangement involved considerations of providing for extended family members and eventually taking over formal ownership of family land. Rental from non-kin was generally considered less desirable because the more formal nature of such arrangements tended to be associated with higher costs to the farmer.

Within the entrepreneurial Anglo group, the goal is to ensure the success of individuals within the primary kin group through education and financial support, with an aim to social mobility. Both of the young entrepreneurial farmers who were formally interviewed had set up their own farming operations, purchasing their own land and machinery independent of their parents' farm operation, although in both cases their parents had co-signed loans for them. This was a necessary stage, prior to taking over the family farm, in order to prove their skills and expertise in farming. The father of one of these young conservative farmers told me

that "there's more to it than just owning land; you've got to know how to run the business end of it. We don't want to pass on our investment until he's ready to handle it". Among the "Yankee" farmers of Illinois as well, "A father who takes a son into the family operation believes the son must prove himself as an entrepreneur, and passing the test is never a certainty" (Salamon 1987:178). From this perspective, the success of the individual in terms of being a good farm operator reflects on the family and enhances the collective status of family members. Among this group no specific conflict was found between kin and class-based social relations. The higher level of profitability within this group allowed for the hiring of non-kin when necessary, and resulted in a less essential dependence on family labour. This freed more family members from participation in production, allowing the pursuit of education and other occupations which have been indicated for this group in the case studies. Similarly, Salamon (1987:178) has noted that "Yankee children are encouraged to obtain an education and explore non-farming career alternatives before deciding to farm".

Community ties are associated with expectations to participate in community activities, and to offer volunteer labour and financial support to maintain community services and social activities. As I will show later, fulfillment or non-fulfillment of these expectations figures prominently in the local status system. The ideal of everyone working together to make a good life and to keep the town going is often related back to the pioneer days by long time residents of the area. The establishment of beef rings to supply fresh meat to the area, and the reliance on cooperative labour for building houses, barns, schools, halls

and churches, are all part of the received history of the area. This received history, frequently quoted by people in the area, is a driving force behind the expectations associated with community ties.

The process which has decreased the overall profitability in farming and concomitantly degraded the community institutional structure has, in addition, reduced the ability of community ties to organize labour and resources for collective action. The combined demands of farming, wage labour, and kin obligations severely restricts participation in community activities. This was particularly evident among young conservative farmers who, as was indicated in the case studies, depend more heavily on wage labour and are involved in a broader network of kin obligations than their entrepreneurial counterparts. Participation by established conservative farmers tends to be motivated by the potential benefits to oneself or one's family (as has been indicated for participation in the recreation committee and the municipal council), or the status of being recognized as a community-minded person. This differs from Salamon's (1987:185) findings among German "yeoman" farmers in central Illinois where the socially cohesive community was attributed to "commitment to continuity of a particular farm and community ... an agrarian ethic still motivates the yeoman Germans even a century after settlement". In the case of entrepreneurial farmers, they simply see no benefits to devoting large amounts of time to community activities or projects. The entrepreneurial "Yankee" farmers in Illinois similarly expressed a belief that the village had little to offer them (Salamon 1987:173). As well, the entrepreneurial goal of expanding production and increasing profits requires a high investment of one's personal and hired labour and

reinvestment of capital. This high investment of capital and labour to some extent precludes a high involvement in the community. In this situation it becomes difficult to rally community-wide support for any project. The conflicting goals within the community, which are embodied in the different strategies and intensified by poor economic conditions in farming, have created a situation where most people simply have no time to spare for community activities.

By producing conflicting goals the existing social base tends to divide rather than unify residents of the area. Both class and extended-kin relations are modified where they intersect, and a high dependence on wage labour reduces the strength of both kin and community ties. The impact has been greatest on the Ukrainians whose conservative strategies depend integrally on extended local ties. The forces of intensification and centralization requiring farmers to increase production and seek alternate sources of income, documented in Chapter One, are the same forces which have led to the closure of businesses, churches, and schools, and the removal of services from the area. In this sense, kin and community ties come into conflict with and are being destroyed by the very forces which are creating a greater demand for the maintenance of these community ties. These conflicts in turn gain expression in the local status system.

#### **4.4 Differentiation in the Local System**

From an emic perspective, several attributes were used to differentiate people within the local system, including ethnicity, family affiliations, community mindedness, occupation, church membership, level of education, relative wealth and place of residence. Time and again during the course

of my research these criteria were expressed by local people to evaluate the status of an individual or family and to explain behaviours considered either good or bad. Where introductions were made between two people associated with the area, the introduction would commonly go along the lines of "Do you know Jim here, he's married to Ted Krawchuck's youngest girl; they're farming the old Stasiuk farm west of Horod". Or, in the case of myself the introductions were usually, "This is Bill Gerrard's granddaughter, Lynn; she's going to school in Winnipeg".

"Oh, yeah, you're Rae's girl. I used to play hockey with Rae when we were going to school". This would be followed by questions about the whereabouts and activities of various family members (and often an opportunity to introduce my research). Such introductions identify one's family affiliations and thus connectedness to the area, as well as ethnicity, occupation, and place of residence.

A common format for social conversations between current or former members of the setting was 'catching up' on the activities of one's self, one's family and others currently or formerly involved in the setting, as well as general activities and events in the town. Where the conversation turned to others, it would often be punctuated with evaluations of the status and character of a person or a family. From these types of comments and their explanations it was possible to define three basic strata in the local system.

The lowest stratum was composed of those people not considered responsible because they were not working or were only occasionally working to support themselves and their family; they were generally thought to drink too much. "I'm not surprised [that he rolled his

pick-up truck). Those Wilson's all drink too much. He's just like one of the Indians". Evaluations made of individuals in almost all cases made reference to the status of the family; as in the case above, both the family and the individual are being evaluated negatively. Accounts of frequent public drunkenness, unruly behaviour, lack of regular employment and non-fulfillment of family or community obligations were often followed with an ethnic slur such as "just like an Indian" or "worse than an Indian". Outward status indicators which characterize this group are run down housing on the periphery of town, ownership of old vehicles if any, and a generally unkempt personal appearance.

The next stratum was composed of those people who were generally assessed as being hard working, community minded people; for example, "The Petryshyn's are good people, they work hard. And you should see them at Mass, they take up a whole pew". The people in this stratum are considered by others in the local system and generally consider themselves to be ordinary people. These are primarily the conservative strategy farmers with small and medium sized operations, accounting for the majority of people in the research area; therefore, there were any number of internal rankings in this middle stratum. In the case of one man generally considered to be hard working, community minded, and from a good family, the fact that he was thought to drink too much was simply dealt with by saying, "he works hard and he plays hard". Another explanation that I heard was that he had been going through a "rough time" recently. Another man, also considered to be a good worker and community minded but from a poorly regarded family, was generally thought to be somewhat irresponsible as a result of what were considered excessive drinking

habits. "You can't grow good crop from bad seed". In terms of objectified wealth, this group was characterized by modest older houses, older model vehicles and farm machinery, and a style of dress generally recognized as working clothes.

The highest stratum in the local system was occupied by those people in the area who were considered to be extremely well off relative to the other people in the area and who possessed a higher level of education or perceived expertise. This stratum included the entrepreneurial farmers with very large operations, as well as the entrepreneurial business people and the professionals who hired the labour of others. These people were not considered hard working and were particularly subject to scrutiny; for example, "she's too stuck up to come and work with the rest of us, it's like they're too good for us". As well, people in this stratum were frequently criticized when there was a perceived lack of community mindedness or generosity; for example, "He's so cheap, it's no wonder he's rich; he wouldn't even buy drinks when he won the raffle", or, "He's got no business taking that job; he's retired and getting a good pension too. Some of the younger guys wouldn't mind doing that job". The terms "stuck up" or "cheap" were often applied to people from this highest stratum. In turn, many of these people felt isolated from other residents of the area and excluded from local activities as was expressed in the comment, "They never ask if anybody else wants to help, as if the rec committee is their own private club". The objectification of wealth within this group takes the form of newer houses, the ownership of newer model vehicles (in most cases more than one), new model farm machinery, and a manner of dress

which is more fashion conscious and less utilitarian, and locally described as "like city people".

The primary positive social values within the local system are hard work (farming, by local evaluations), community mindedness, connection to a "good" family, and fulfillment of family obligations. These, in addition to the outward indicators of status differences in terms of objectified wealth (housing, vehicles, farm machinery, and dress), are important to note because the "statuses are the product of the way in which the community objectifies patterns of correspondence between economic, social, and cultural capital" (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:323). Certain forms of economic capital go hand in hand with certain forms of social and cultural capital. In the community of Elphinstone, owning a large farm and buying labour power (economic capital) corresponds with higher levels of education, the use of more modern farm machinery and farming techniques, a certain style of dress (cultural capital), and a broader range of ties outside of the local setting (social capital). A farmer in the community of Elphinstone who meets these criteria would be considered "high class" by the participants in the local system. The low, middle, and upper strata discussed above largely parallel the marginal, conservative, and entrepreneurial strategies respectively. Status is the community (consensus) evaluation of the value of a specific combination of economic strategy, family affiliation and personal attributes. Individuals and households are inclined to pursue a certain strategy based on social and economic attributes and the intergenerational transmission of these. In cases where certain status attributes do not correspond to those expected for a particular strategy, this is suggestive of a change in the local

system. "What varies historically is the social practice of classifying the ascribed properties of a class and their alignment" (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989:323). Within the case studies presented in Chapter Three it was evident that some of the conservative strategists were enabled, by the fact of having a higher level of economic capital, to achieve some of the attributes associated with a higher status position such as higher education and large new houses. In some cases these outward expressions of greater wealth were considered pretentious by other conservative strategists. As a result of their relatively greater wealth these individuals were expected to contribute proportionately more to their extended family and to community activities. These individuals were thus distinguished from other middle status individuals but not yet recognized as high status. LiPuma and Meltzoff (1989:323) have similarly noted that what characterizes the rising bourgeois boatowners in Galicia

"is not that they own the means of production or buy labor-power (they have always done so, as have small-scale working class boat owners), but the fact that increasing economic capital is coupled with social and cultural signs of a higher class status, thus permitting a class identity new to that community to emerge or be objectified".

In the following section I will explore the possible direction of change more fully by viewing the strategies in terms of their relative levels of capital.

#### **4.5 Social, Economic and Cultural Capital and their Conversions**

The majority of farmers in the Elphinstone area, by the fact of owning land and producing cash crops, can broadly be classified as petty commodity producers, implying a whole set of dependency relations to the marketplace. This does nothing to increase our understanding of how the

local strategies are related to the general processes of society. While at one level different forms of familism have contributed to the generation of different social and economic strategies (which I have related in this case to ethnicity), the key features of these strategies must be drawn to a higher level of abstraction in order to generalize and relate these to more general social processes. In this section I will present a view of local strategies in terms of the different levels of the three forms of capital each of the strategies represents. Viewing the strategies in this manner will enable me to make inferences concerning the ability of the different strategies to cope with the situation of economic decline in the region, and the probable direction of change in the local system.

Bourdieu's formulation of the three forms of capital attempts to explain differentiation by going beyond a strict economic definition. Capital exists and can be accumulated not only in the dominant economic form, which is directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights, but in social and cultural forms as well. Cultural capital exists in embodied, objectified and institutionalized states. In its embodied state, cultural capital is inextricably linked to the person, it is the whole and direct product of socialization. It functions symbolically and is revealed in "long lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu 1983:243) such as pronunciations characteristic of a class or region. The embodied capital accumulated in an individual "depends for its real efficacy on ... competition between himself and other possessors of capital competing for the same goods, in which scarcity -- and through it social value -- is

generated" (Bourdieu 1983:246). In its objectified state cultural capital takes the form of material objects and media (writings, works of art, machines). Cultural goods can be acquired materially, which presupposes economic capital, but the ability to make use of them relies on embodied capital. "To possess the machines, he [the owner of the means of production] only needs economic capital; to appropriate and use them in accordance with their specific purpose, he must have access to embodied cultural capital either in person or in proxy" (Bourdieu 1983:247). In its institutionalized state cultural capital takes the form of academic qualifications. This form of capital has relative autonomy with regards to its bearer and the cultural capital he possesses (Bourdieu 1983:248). Academic qualifications are an institutional recognition of the cultural capital possessed by an individual. Qualification holders may then be compared or exchanged and a conversion rate between cultural capital and economic capital can be established.

"This product of the conversion of economic capital into cultural capital establishes the value, in terms of cultural capital, of the holder of a given qualification related to other qualification holders and, by the same token, the monetary value for which it can be exchanged on the labor market" (Bourdieu 1983:248).

Like other forms of capital, the profits which the academic qualification guarantees depends on scarcity.

Social capital is the sum of actual or potential resources linked to membership in a group.

"The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected" (Bourdieu 1983:249).

This network of connections is the product of continual investment to establish or reproduce social relationships which carry durable obligations or institutionally guaranteed rights. In the case of a kin network, investments may take the form of gift giving between relatives. Such gift giving, as a sign of recognition, "through the mutual recognition and recognition of group membership which it implies, reproduces the group" (Bourdieu 1983:250). At the same time, for a group to maintain high levels of social capital, limits to the group must be established beyond which the benefits of membership do not extend.

The entrepreneurial strategies, while producing social disadvantage within the local system, have resulted in higher accumulations of capital (in economic, cultural, and social forms) which are advantageous in the mainstream of society. Conversely, the conservative strategies, producing attributes which have positive value within the local system, result in relatively low accumulations of capital and thus tend to be a disadvantage in operating within the mainstream of society.

The entrepreneurial Anglo segment of the population of Elphinstone is by far better off economically than the conservative Ukrainian population as is evident in farm size, land quality, and profitability of farming operations. This capital has a momentum which has produced within the Anglo group qualities and attributes which are recognized as having value in the larger society and are convertible into economic capital. Beyond family form and present levels of capital, differences between the groups include patterns of speech and accents, mannerisms, academic qualifications, and technical expertise.

In terms of the conversions of forms of capital, the Anglo families, possessing more capital, are capable of extending the period of socialization for their children as family labour is not necessary for survival of the household. The value of this socialization tends to be high because the parents themselves have benefitted from extended socialization and formal education. The initial investment in cultural capital, frequently supplemented with academic qualifications, inculcates a pattern of speech, accent, and mannerisms which are generally recognizable as those of the middle class. The symbolic value of these embodied characteristics could be expected to facilitate interaction with representatives of external agencies upon which farming operations depends -- the lending institutions, the wheat pool, the farm chemical and equipment dealers, and government departments. The higher incidence of involvement in farm organizations generates a broader network of ties and enhances the knowledge and technical expertise which these entrepreneurial farmers possess. This knowledge and technical expertise in farming enables these farmers to employ new farming technologies and techniques which have the potential, at least, to produce more efficient and profitable farming operations.

From the conservative case studies several factors were apparent. Ukrainian families had lower levels of economic capital, and relied more on household and extended family labour. The established and retired conservative farmers all entered into active participation in subsistence activities and the farming operation at an earlier age, due to economic necessity. This limited the time that was devoted to education and has resulted in a situation where academic qualifications beyond high school

are rare. All of the conservative strategists interviewed were socialized in families with low levels of education, where Ukrainian was the household language. This has resulted in a pattern of speech, accents and mannerisms which do not correspond to the middle class norms of the society in general. As symbolic indicators of class, these embodied attributes would not be expected to provide any advantage in interactions with external organizations and agencies. While large networks of social connections are produced by the pattern of extended-kin familism, these do not provide economic advantage vis-a-vis the larger society. In terms of convertibility into capital, the sum of actual or potential resources which an individual can access through membership in a kin group tends to be low. The conservative cases studied where higher levels of economic capital have been achieved, however, are suggestive of how the pattern alluded to above is in the process of being altered. These cases exhibited a tendency towards larger land holdings and higher levels of education. While extended kin ties continued to be socially significant, the economic importance of these ties was minimal. The implication is that as some segments of the Ukrainian population accumulates capital, this capital will gain momentum. As the momentum of capital builds and begins to be expressed in cultural and symbolic terms, the outward indicators of status associated with this group within the local system will more closely resemble those associated with the upper stratum and their strategies will take a form similar to those of the entrepreneurial Anglo population. The conservative Ukrainian farm operations which continue to depend heavily on supplemental income from wage labour and subsistence production rather than intensifying production will continue

to lose their ability to compete with larger producers, given the continued trend of low grain prices and high capital requirements in farming. In the short run wage labour will allow the extended family to be maintained as a consumption unit. The limited and decreasing wage opportunities in the area, however, will eventually force many of these operations out of production, unless they can meet their capital requirements in some other way.

In LiPuma and Meltzoff's (1989:327) research in a Galician fishing village it was found that as certain segments of the relatively undifferentiated population increased accumulations of capital as a result of structural changes in fishing, social and cultural differentiation followed. In the case of Elphinstone, the situation of economic decline has led to fuller involvement in and dependence on capitalist forms of production by the Ukrainians of the area and a concomitant decrease in economic dependence on extended-kin ties. Based on the limited data presented here, this increasing dependence on capitalist forms of production appears in the short run to be increasing local differentiation, but in the future will lead to a decrease in differentiation at the local level as one segment of the Ukrainian population develops strategies more entrepreneurial in nature and the remaining group gradually succumbs to economic pressures and leaves the area.

## Chapter 5

## CONCLUSION

I set out at the beginning to determine the strategies being employed by the residents of the community of Elphinstone in light of the crisis in farming, and to assess the implications of these strategies for the future of the community. I have shown that the strategies found within the community are ethnically based, and have indicated that the different orientations underlying these strategies have generally been divisive and have precluded coordinated and cooperative community action to deal with the impacts of economic decline on the community's institutional structure and services.

Since the completion of field research, the community of Elphinstone has experienced several significant changes. The elevator closure took place on schedule and farmers now transport their grain to Newdale, Sandy Lake, and Oakburn. I was told that some farmers are having trouble delivering their grain at certain times of the year, because the capacities of these elevators is being exceeded and there are an insufficient number of grain cars being supplied to move the grain out. As a result, some of the larger farm operations are relying on producer cars -- grain cars which they pay to have delivered to the elevator on a certain day -- so they can guarantee that their grain can be sold in time to meet quota deadlines. Four older conservative farmers have since

decided to retire. For the time being they continue to live on their farms while renting their land. One entrepreneurial farmer sold all of his farm machinery to pay off his debts and moved with his family to Brandon, where he works for a farm implement dealer. He is currently renting his farm to a neighbour until he can find a buyer for it.

In 1989 the general store burned down and the owner decided against rebuilding. I was told that some of the local residents are now doing most of their shopping in either Sandy Lake, Erickson or Strathclair, although many are making more frequent trips to Brandon, sixty miles away, where grocery prices are considerably lower.

The curling and hockey rink in Elphinstone is currently in need of repairs. For two years the recreation committee has been unable to obtain grants to make these repairs. Both the recreation committee and the Lions Club in town have attempted to raise sufficient money for the repairs, but as yet they have been unsuccessful. If the repairs cannot be made, the rink will have to be closed for the winter of 1991-92.

These changes have serious implications for the remaining population in the community. Residents of the community by necessity have expanded their network of regular ties outside the area, and one of the primary institutions of the community, the Recreation Committee, is on the verge of losing its reason for being. Aside from the primary school, the hotel and the post office, there is little else to bring people to town. As a result, the village of Elphinstone has to a large degree ceased to be the focus of movement and need satisfaction for residents of the immediate area, and regular face-to face interactions occur among a more limited group of people. The community of reference will expand in size as people

establish regular and significant ties to other communities; one can reasonably expect that the local stratification system will undergo some change as peoples' primary point of reference changes.

In the short run conservative strategies have allowed marginally profitable farming operations to continue through dependence on wage labour and the support of an extended kin network. The situation of limited and continually decreasing local employment opportunities and the economic pressures created by low grain prices, will continue to produce conflict between the demands of kin, community and class. The future impact of the GATT talks and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade deal on federal farm policy is as yet unclear, however, the local expectation is that subsidization of grain production and marketing will be drastically reduced if not eliminated entirely. Given this situation, individual farmers will bear a greater burden of the costs of production and additional pressure will be created for conservative strategists to adopt more entrepreneurial strategies or exit farming entirely.

Three lines of theory have contributed significantly to the construction of this argument and have facilitated the analysis of micro-level ethnographic data in their relationship to macro level processes. The concept of "community of reference", referring to the limits of the local status system as is suggested by Cancian (1985), and the view of the local system as composed of "spheres" of connections to the macro level (Bennett 1985) allows for the analysis of change in the boundaries of the local system over time. The extent of the "community of reference" and the "spheres" of connections will be expected to change as the nature of the ties to the macro system change. In essence, these concepts indicate

techniques for organizing ethnographic data within a micro-macro framework.

Both Salamon (1987) and Heller and Quesada (1977) have stressed the significance of ethnicity and family form in guiding economic behaviour. This has lent support to the view of ethnicity as a key source of variation within the local system, particularly in the area of socio-economic strategies and the local stratification system.

Reconceptualization of the macro-oriented concepts of capital and class, proposed by LiPuma and Meltzoff (1989), allows for a view of local systems as they are related to macro processes and stratification in the macro system. The concepts of cultural and social capital, viewed in their direct relationship to economic capital, allows for the analysis of features of the local status system in articulation with class stratification.

The argument I have developed in this thesis is intended only to be suggestive of the processes contributing to decline in the community of Elphinstone. Broader sampling -- including data for other communities, further elaboration of the economic aspects of the strategies, and a detailed analysis of the institutions which mediate between the micro and macro levels -- would significantly enhance and strengthen the argument I have presented.

Future research on rural Canadian agricultural communities should give specific attention to federal and provincial agricultural and social policies, the impact of these on rural areas via mediating institutions, and the ability of local people to manipulate these policies to their own ends. The future of small agricultural communities depends primarily on

the ability of residents to develop and enhance strategies which can manipulate or circumvent the forces of power and control concentrated in government and industry.

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