Frames of rural community controversy

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Frames of rural community controversy

by

Kathy Sue Kremer

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For the Major Program
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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

Controversies within communities are as old as civilization itself, yet each age approaches them as if they were unique phenomena, as if similar problems had never arisen elsewhere. (Coleman, 1957:2)

As James S. Coleman points out, communities of place have long been sites of local dispute. In my own rural Minnesota community there have been numerous controversies through the years. In the 1940s employees at the chicken processing plant attempted to unionize and the company responded with force, sharply dividing the working class and businessmen of the community. In the 1960s when the city council considered selling our public-owned utilities to a private company there was rapid mobilization of community members opposed to losing local control. And in the 1980s when construction of scattered-site low-income rental housing was planned there was controversy over the location of the housing that resulted in some units not being built.

These occurrences are not unlike those in other rural communities. Recalling stories of community controversies, and my own involvement in more recent ones, at some point it seemed there was no turning back - the dynamics of the controversy were moving our community forward without opportunity to return to whence we had come. Moreover, the impact of each controversy was with us for a long time to come as the fingers pointed and impieties shouted influenced our shared future. As one community member expressed to me
as we discussed local controversies she has been involved in, “It sticks in the craw for a long time.”

This is a study of community controversy in rural areas. It examines recent episodes of local dispute over livestock production practices in Minnesota locations - a type of controversy increasingly taking place in rural areas. The course of controversy over time is considered, as are frames of interpretation adopted by individuals and groups involved in the place-based communities where controversy occurs.

While community controversies surrounding large-scale livestock production practices are recent occurrences, change in agriculture is not a recent phenomenon. Beginning in the early 1900s there has been an almost constant pattern of change in agriculture throughout the nation. But over the last two decades this change accelerated with two distinct trends - rapid decrease in the number of farms, and production concentrated in fewer farms with increased levels of production (Albrecht, 1997). These changes are evident in Minnesota, where the total number of farms between 1982 and 1997 declined 22 percent and the number of full time farmers declined 35 percent (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1982; 1997). Farm operators are also a declining percentage of all Minnesota residents. In 1987 farm operators made up just under two percent of the total population of the state. By 1997 this declined to 1.3% of the population. Full time farm operators are an even smaller percentage of the total population, and by 1997 they had declined to less than one percent of all Minnesota residents (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1987; 1997). While trends suggest the loss of Minnesota farms is slowing, farms that remain are increasingly likely to be operated by an individual whose principal occupation is not farming.
Change is evident in almost all sectors of Minnesota animal agriculture. Since the 1980s production of dairy, swine, and even poultry has been increasingly concentrated among fewer producers while inventories of swine, beef and poultry have increased. These changes in animal production reflect a process of restructuring that has important implications for producers and rural communities.

At the same time animal agriculture has been changing, Minnesota's population has been growing and changing as well. Of the upper-Midwestern states, Minnesota experienced the highest rate of growth from 1990 to 2000: twelve percent. Our neighboring states of Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and North Dakota saw smaller increases in their populations: 9.6, 5.4, 8.5, and .5 percent respectively (US Census Bureau, 2000). While Minnesota's population increased, the pattern of growth over the past decade was significantly different from the pattern of growth during the 1980s. During the 1990s Minnesota experienced a 'rural rebound' with population growth in rural unincorporated areas where there had been a loss in population the previous decade. There was also increased population growth in urban areas located outside the central cities. Moreover, while farm operators and their households were historically the majority of residents in rural unincorporated areas of the state, this has changed as well. During the 1990s there was an increase in both the rural population and the percent of these rural residents not engaged in farming.

The animal agriculture and population changes described here have important implications for Minnesota residents and their communities. Different structures of ownership and control of animal agriculture may affect farmers’ interactions with each other as well as with the broader community. Changes in animal production practices may impact
household quality of life. And community and neighborhood controversies may emerge in the context of restructuring in animal agriculture practices. These local disputes are specifically addressed in this research.

From a sociological standpoint this research expands our understanding of community controversy. The first objective of the research is to apply a model developed 45 years ago (Coleman, 1957) pointing to dynamic tendencies in issues and social organization in the course of community controversy to recent disputes over changes in animal agriculture. Coleman suggests that controversies in communities follow a common path. This research proposes to examine the degree of support for this position. In terms of issues in community controversy, Coleman's model submits specific issues will yield to broader concerns, new issues arise that are quite different from the original issues, and what begins as disagreement evolves to antagonism. The model also points to change in social organization as controversy develops in a community. Personal interaction between individuals within each group increases, while interaction between people in opposing groups diminishes. Partisan organizations (as Coleman refers to opposing groups in a controversy) form that were not in existence prior to the controversy. Extremist leaders emerge who have not previously been considered in this role. Existing community groups are drawn into the controversy. And communication within the community is increasingly less dependent on formal media sources and more dependent on informal word-of-mouth communication. These tendencies in the course of community controversy posited by Coleman in the middle of the last century are explored in this research using a recent local dispute surrounding animal production.
The second objective of this investigation is to identify the frames of interpretation that exist in community controversies over animal production practices. The opposing groups that develop within community controversy can be viewed as having competing frames. A frame organizes individual experiences and guides actions, serving as a "schemata of interpretation" (Goffman, 1974:21). Frames perform three functions: identification of problems and cause, identification of tactics and strategies, and identification of the reasons for action (Snow and Benford, 1988). Beus and Dunlap (1990) identify key dimensions of two frames in agriculture - conventional and alternative agricultural paradigms. They suggest conventional agriculture is based on dependence, centralization, competition, domination of nature, specialization, and exploitation, while alternative agriculture is founded in independence, decentralization, community, harmony with nature, diversity, and restraint. Chiappe and Flora (1998) expand these two paradigms suggesting the additional elements of quality family life and spirituality are integral to the alternative agriculture paradigm, particularly among women. In this research conventional and alternative agriculture paradigms proposed by Beus and Dunlap, and expanded by Chiappe and Flora, are compared to frames identified in community controversy with respect to animal agriculture production.

While increasing our sociological understanding of community controversy is important to the discipline, examining local dispute is also important from a practical standpoint. As rural communities are increasingly impacted by global change they become sites of controversy related to these broader transitions. This is certainly the case in animal agriculture where there has been vertical integration, increased dependence on technology, and dramatic increases in the size and concentration of production. In Minnesota one impact
of these changes in animal agriculture has been community controversy. Coleman (1957) posits that in traditional societies problems were similar from year to year and from village to village, making diffusion of problem-solving techniques easier. Neighboring villages benefited from one another's experiences. In our rapidly changing society, however, diffusion from community to community and generation to generation cannot keep pace with changes in events. Community leaders have no precedent to look to when confronted with controversy. Coleman suggests case studies conducted by social scientists serve the function of increasing the rate of diffusion and provide examples to communities. Further, this is best accomplished when case studies are connected and their common elements examined. Understanding the dimensions of controversy and different frames in dispute enhances the ability of community leaders to benefit from the experiences of other rural communities and affect the course of local controversy.

In this research community controversies in rural Minnesota are examined using a combination of qualitative research methods: semi-structured interviews, roundtable discussions, and review of media accounts and historical documents. Research was completed in conjunction with a study of social and community impacts of animal agriculture, part of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on Animal Agriculture completed for the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University. The scope of the GEIS research was much broader than that of this dissertation, and only elements central to community controversy from the research are included here. There was also subsequent research completed beyond the work of the GEIS.
The objectives of this examination are to

1) examine the degree of support for the pattern of tendencies in community controversy posited by James S. Coleman in 1957 using a type of controversy that has emerged in the last decade, and

2) identify frames in community controversies regarding animal production and compare these with conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms.

While Coleman's framework for examining controversy continues as a foundation for academic research in the social sciences, an examination of the model in the manner proposed here has been absent from the literature for more than three decades. The research also seeks to determine if distinct frames exist within community controversies reflect components of conventional and alternative agriculture paradigms.

The following chapter reviews the academic literature and theory related to community controversy and more fully presents the theory of controversy examined in this research. It also discusses the literature on frames and frame dispute. Chapter III provides a review of changes taking place in agriculture and animal agriculture in Minnesota, providing the context within which community controversies are emerging. Much of this is based on research completed for the Generic Environmental Impact on Animal Agriculture. Chapter IV describes the qualitative research methods employed in this research and the work of Homans (1950), who proposed a theory of sociological observation upon which this research design is based. Chapter V describes the research findings related to the course of controversy and Coleman's theory. The research findings related to frames in community controversy are described in Chapter VI. And the final chapter provides a summary of the research conclusions and points to questions that remain unanswered, suggesting further
research is indeed necessary as we continue to expand our understanding of controversy in communities of place.
CHAPTER II.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research brings together the concepts of community controversy and frames in dispute. The following discussion reviews the academic literature pertinent to these areas, defining terms that guide the research.

Community and Controversy

When sociologists use the term community they are referring to groups of people, although beyond that there are many differences in definition. There is agreement, however, that it is through community that people regularly interact (Flora et al., 1992), a process that is at times harmonious and at other times conflictual. Consequently communities have long been sites of local controversy (Coleman, 1957), a phenomenon worthy of examination.

Examining Community

In 1955 George Hillery identified 95 different definitions for the term community, which he folded into 16 classifications and three general themes, 1) commonality among people; 2) social interaction; and 3) common land - themes that appropriately encompass present definitions for community (Stoneall, 1983).

Commonality among people is what sociologists consider community based upon a common identity. Within this set of definitions individuals may have a shared emotional or symbolic attachment, such as religion. Social interaction is community as a social system.
Through this functional perspective community is viewed as an organization or a set of organizations through which a group of people meet their needs. Common land, which is not the same as common property, refers to the place-based definition of community; one more closely aligned with that of geographers who focus on locality based community where community is linked to a 'bricks and mortar' space.

In this research a process-based approach is used to define community. Community is understood as interaction between individuals within a place-based community. This definition suggests both a social and geographic meaning for community, but does not foreordain mutual support or meeting the needs of individual community members. It is suggested that how people interact with one another influences the structures and institutions of the geographic space, which in turn influence activities of those who interact in the community (Lobao, 1990).

Development of the theoretical base of what we consider the discipline of sociology is linked to the industrial revolution in Europe, as is the sub-set of community sociology. Prior to the industrial revolution the population of Europe was primarily rural and agricultural. Multiple generations of a family lived together in rural areas. Although there was production for trade purposes as well as a small commercial class, families primarily produced the food and goods they needed for survival. With the development of farm mechanization there was no longer a need for multi-generation labor. Young family members began migrating to larger towns and developing cities for employment in factories where mechanization was resulting in the transition from cottage-based production to industrial production methods. By the middle of the 1800s there were clear distinctions
noted in the social lives of those who remained in rural areas and those that now resided and worked in large urban places.

Those now recognized as founders of the discipline of sociology, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Ferdinand Toennies, and Emile Durkheim all addressed community within their analyses of these changes in society in the 1800s. Toennies viewed communities prior to the industrial revolution as characterized by close ties between people that were long lasting. Land, families, kinship and neighborliness based upon mutual love for one another were axial to what he termed as Gemeinschaft. This was not the case in urban, industrialized areas that developed as a result of the industrial revolution. Communal ties of rural villages were replaced with impersonal ties in urban areas: cold, calculated interactions between individuals with a goal of personal advantage. This sense of what he termed Gesellschaft led to the need for laws and rules to govern interactions. Laws and rules were not necessary when the values and morals of Gemeinschaft controlled community interaction. Toennies was the first of the major theorists to define and describe these ideal community types, and in many ways the subsequent work of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber build upon the concepts Toennies first proposed (Stoneall, 1983).

Durkheim also looked at the transition from small, community-based society to nation-state society. His focus, however, was on the division of labor. In a community-based society (predominant prior to the industrial revolution) there was what he termed mechanical solidarity. Individual people produced the same items, each going through similar steps in the production, with ties between people based upon similarities. In the nation-state society production was integrated, with each individual repetitively completing the same step in a specialized labor pool. This is what Durkheim termed organic solidarity,
rooted not in ties based on similarities but on ties based on dependence upon one another. He suggested this provided a more ordered society within a large population. Hence, what he postulated was a transition from independence in a community-based society to interdependence in a nation-state society.

Weber looked at the rationality associated with transformation from a pre-industrial to an industrial society. In the pre-industrial era people accepted the traditional authority of hereditary leaders (kings, queens, landowners, etc.) and of religious leaders. With industrialization and logical thinking came the development of rational authority. People no longer accepted leadership based upon heredity and demanded communities with legitimate authority based on laws and secular government and economic systems.

Marx identified the transition from feudalism to capitalism as it related to the mode of production and changes in class. Rather than rural cottage-based production, workers were brought together in large cities to produce products for an individual business owner. Marx saw community as moving from a place-based definition to an interaction-based definition related to work. In addition, the basis of social action moved from community-based to class-based.

Perspectives from the University of Chicago were significant in the first half of the 1900s to developing an emphasis on community within sociology. In 1921 Robert Parks first coined the phrase 'human ecology', referring to his theoretical perspective on communities. Park, along with Ernest Burgess and Louis Wirth, put forth a perspective that viewed human communities in the same way that plant and animal ecologies are examined. Interdependence and independence of roles and functions are examined on a group, rather than individual level. Sociologists of the Chicago School looked specifically at how physical
and spatial structure influence social behavior. In other words, does the structure of the urban area influence the social behavior of urban residents? In particular they looked at the city of Chicago, which was rapidly changing in terms of physical structure and social characteristics. They repeatedly pointed to the large size of the city, population density and heterogeneity as negatively impacting social relationships (in contrast to the homogeneity, low population density, and small population of non-urban areas).

Whether or not one agrees with the perspective, the work of the Chicago School was clearly significant to increasing interest in and studies of community. While there had been community research prior to that time, particularly within the area of rural communities, it was Parks, Burgess, Wirth, and the Chicago School perspective in the 1930s that pushed forward community as an area of consideration. The idea of using community as a laboratory to test sociological theory was clearly an important part of what has developed as community study methodology. And indeed, we see substantial attention to community and use of community case studies, both urban and rural, from that point through the 1950s (e.g. Goldschmidt, 1947; Lynd and Lynd, 1929; Lynd and Lynd, 1937; Pope, 1942; Wirth, 1928; Vidich & Bensman, 1958).

Over the past decade there has been a resurgence of interest in studies of community, along with growing recognition that any contemporary phenomenon to be examined must be considered within this context. Decentralization or devolution of programs by federal government agencies has placed a greater emphasis on local decision making – often the neighborhood or community (Swanson, 2001). It is at this most local level where residents feel they have the most influence in terms of participation and change (Marston and Towers, 1993). This new interest in community is reflected in numerous new community case studies
Conflict in Society

The examination of conflict in society has its sociological roots in the Marxist theoretical tradition, but has gone well beyond what Marx posited. Conflict theory has evolved from a theory of conflict itself to a general theory of society. Within this perspective society is viewed as an arrangement of conflicting interests that explain not only disagreement but also stability. Social order is the result of contending interest groups, each with different levels of resources from which they draw (Collins, 1997).

The work of Simmel in the early 1900s initiated what we know as modern conflict theory. Central to Simmel's perspective (Collins, 1997) is that social order and conflict are not opposites. Rather, conflict more often results in bringing people together than breaking them apart. He viewed all stratified social systems as inherently structured by conflict. Simmel also deviated from Marx; suggesting people do not always fall within self-contained groups with common interests that differentiate them from individuals in other self-contained groups. Simmel suggested instead that all societies have crosscutting allegiances where those who stand together in one episode may be opposed in another. In other words, any given individual belongs to several different groups. The nature of conflict is influenced by this interdependence and social contact (Coser, 1971).

Coser built closely on the work of Simmel and the work of Simmel and Coser are often theoretically linked (Collins, 1997; Wallace and Wolf, 1986). Coser’s (1956) premise is that communities maintain boundaries through conflict. There is an increase in internal
cohesion when there are threats from an outside source. When internal cohesion is high, there is an increased likelihood of community action. In this way external conflict can strengthen the group. Coser also viewed internal conflict as having the ability to strengthen the group and clarify group identity. However, in groups without interdependence - the "cross-cutting allegiances" Simmel discussed - internal conflict has the potential to be divisive. Coser notes "interdependence checks basic cleavages (1956:76)" reducing the likelihood of polarized issues within a group.

With a renewed interest in community as a context for sociological inquiry, there have been several recent examinations of local conflict. Sociologists generally recognize communities engage in both episodes of consensual and of conflictual action (Luloff, 1990). Further, episodes of conflict have a multitude of impacts on the community. Couch and Kroll-Smith (1994) point specifically to environmental conflict and suggest two possible outcomes - community solidarity is enhanced or it is undermined. This is consistent with Coleman, who also pointed out that communities are not untouched by conflict, and "no amount of social engineering can return these communities to a former state (1957:2)." Flora et al. (1997) suggest where there is legitimacy of alternatives community members are able to disagree while maintaining respect for one another. Disagreement is not personalized, abusive, or accusatory. Rather, there is acceptance of controversy, depersonalization of politics, and focus on process. There is willingness among community members to accept a diversity of viewpoints. Sanders (1961) clarifies the negative side of community disagreement. In the aftermath, he suggests, the group that did not prevail may consider the issue unresolved and community division may transfer itself to other activities and interaction among community members.
Conflict and controversy are just two of the terms found within the literature to describe disagreement between groups of individuals within communities. Regrettably, these terms are also interchanged throughout the literature without significant reference to definition or interpretation. While much of the recent literature references James S. Coleman's theory of community controversy (1957) it must be pointed out that in this work Coleman does not define the term. Adding to the confusion, the title of Coleman's monograph is actually Community Conflict, another term he leaves undefined.

Coser defined conflict as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals (1956:8).” Although each definition is nuanced, the intent of destroying or eliminating opponents is consistent in definitions of conflict throughout the literature (Aubert, 1963; Mack, 1965; Gamson, 1966). This interpretation is consistent with what Simmel viewed as competition.

The foremost sociological characteristic of competition is the fact that conflict in it is indirect. In as far as one gets rid of an adversary or damages him directly, one does not compete with him. (1955:57)

There seems to be consensus within the literature that conflict encompasses a conscious struggle between individuals or groups for the same goal, requiring elimination of the competing group.

In the case of controversy there is less to draw from. Coleman (1957) and Sanders (1961) thoroughly describe stages and characteristics of community controversy. Both note the need for advancing the study of community controversy, and the necessity to breaking down this examination to its components. Yet differences between conflict and controversy or characteristics separating controversy from other types of disagreements are not clarified.
Clearly what they are explaining are periods of conscious dispute between groups of individuals in communities who seek disparate outcomes. As previously noted, Coleman does not define the term controversy in his discussion of this concept. Moreover, Sanders (1961) provides the sole definition of community controversy encountered in this review of the social sciences literature.

Controversy implies the existence of two conditions: (1) an opposition is active and (2) there is some general community involvement. Both of these are conditions of degree. Just how active an opposition must be to create a controversy is an unsettled point. One or two letters to the newspaper editor by the town crank, whether for or against the measure, would not in itself indicate a controversy. Certainly in a genuine controversy the legitimizing body is forced to consider opposition arguments to the point that these or the possible political behavior of those advancing them have a bearing upon the decision. The opposition may not defeat the measure, but what they have to say is taken seriously.

On the other hand, 'general community involvement' would mean that some citizen or lay behavior, as opposed to professional or official behavior occurred. Where clubs and individuals go out of their way to take a stand pro or con, beyond the call of duty, there are indications of general community involvement. How much of the population needs to be involved and how emotionally intense this involvement needs to be cannot be settled by definition. At any rate, the decision by a small official body on behalf of what its members consider community interest, without the knowledge of others in the community, is not community involvement in the sense used here. There must be people willing to state publicly their reasons for or against the proposal and these people must have arguments or a following significant enough (by numbers, prestige, influence) to be taken into account by the legitimizing body in reaching its decision. (Pp. 59-60)

For this research Sanders' definition of community controversy will be used. This definition contains two central components: active opposition and community involvement. It also gives the role of community decision making to a legitimizing body, which makes its decision based on input from community groups and individuals. The role of a legitimizing
authority is also found in Coleman’s discussion of community controversy. This may be a central theme in definitions of controversy that can be built upon.

Community Controversy

While the underlying impetus for community controversies are divergent, they follow remarkably similar pattern as they develop (Luloff, 1990; Coleman, 1957). While many researchers have examined recent episodes of community controversy (e.g. Albrecht et al., 1996; Bregendahl et al., 2000; Couch and Kroll-Smith, 1994; Flora et al., 2000; Wing et al., 1996), there is a lacuna in theoretical discussion of community controversy. The two examinations of note remain Coleman (1957) and Sanders (1961).

Sanders examined community controversies surrounding fluoridation of city water supplies in several New England communities. He found these controversies proceeded through a series of stages, each with a set of sociological criteria.

Initiation. In this stage the idea is still in the discussion phase and the initiator is attempting to get support through face-to-face interaction with colleagues and friends. The initiator is, in a sense, sounding out the idea and will only proceed with support from the primary group. If the idea does not receive support, the initiator(s) may raise it again in the future.

Preproposal Stage. When those in the primary group start making secondary contacts, the idea moves from the initiation phase to the preproposal stage. People considered to be important in the community are called upon for support, and a plan of action is developed. The group that has formed is the ‘pro’ side, but it is during this stage that an opposition group may appear. The opposition is at a disadvantage in this stage, as the
concept is still not fully developed, and those in the pro group may adapt the plan in response to the opposition. Sanders suggest this stage may be fairly long.

**The Proposal.** When there is a formal presentation necessitating action by a legitimizing body, the controversy has moved to the proposal stage. Tactics employed by the pro group will include selecting the ‘right’ people as sponsors, timing the presentation for a point when the community is most ready to support it, and couching the proposal in terms that enhance community support.

**Community Action.** There cannot be formal interaction by the opposition group until the proposal is fully formed. Once the proposal is made to the legitimizing body and the opposition group becomes active, the community has moved into a period of community controversy. Groups and individuals, pro and con, will make public statements of support or opposition to the proposal with enough people, prestige, or influence behind them to be taken into account by the legitimizing body.

**The Decision.** The legitimizing body has four options once the proposal is presented: postponement, rejection, amendment, or adoption. The sociological property important in this stage is the outcome is not relevant. What is important is that a decision is made and there is a winner and a loser.

**Aftermath.** Once a decision has been made there is subsequent maneuvering around the issue. Those on the losing side will likely not consider this a settled issue, and partisanship within the issue may transfer to other community activities. There may also be a new sequence of events initiated as a result of the decision.

While Sanders examined community controversies surrounding the issue of fluoridation of public water supplies, he suggests theories of community controversy can be
applied to broader areas resulting in an increased understanding of national and international questions.

Coleman (1957) provides greater detail than Sanders in his explanation of community controversy, identifying factors that affect the initiation of controversy; the dynamics of controversy; and elements that influence the course of the controversy.

Precursors to Community Controversy. Not all incidents or crises in a community result in controversy. Events will either defeat a community, unite a community, or cause controversy. The type of event and the context of the community in which it occurs are important in determining if it results in unification, defeat or controversy. Those events that lead to controversy will 1) affect an important sphere of community members’ lives; 2) differentially impact community members; and 3) community members must feel they are able to take action. Incidents can originate internally, externally, or be internally originated but influenced by external sources. Coleman points out that local controversies are increasingly external or are influenced by external sources.

The Dynamics of Controversy. Coleman identifies what he terms dynamic tendencies in both issues and social organization that are part of all episodes of community controversy. Issues in community controversies go through three transformations (Figure 1).

1) Specific issues transform to general issues. This most often happens in communities with cleavages in community values or interests and does not occur as often in political controversies.

2) New issues arise. These are often unrelated to the original issues and come to the fore in two different ways. First, involuntary issues arise as relationships between individuals and opposing groups deteriorate. These are often issues unrelated to the original
issues. New issues also arise voluntarily in a purposive manner. These issues are often intentionally introduced to solidify identity or encourage broader interest.

(3) Disagreement evolves to antagonism. A dispute that may have started out centered on the issues evolves to personal attacks or hostility. This hostility itself can perpetuate the controversy, far from the original issues.

**Figure 1. Changes in Issues in Community Controversy (Coleman, 1957:11)**

(1) Initial single issue → (2) Disrupts equilibrium of community relations → (3) Allows previously suppressed issues against opponent to appear → (4) More and more of opponents's beliefs enter into the disagreement

↓

(7) Dispute becomes independent of initial disagreement ← (6) Charges against opponent as a person ← (5) The opponent appears totally bad

Community controversies also change the social organization of the community

(1) Polarization of social relations. As the controversy grows interactions within groups flourish, while interactions between individuals in opposing groups whither. Friends and neighbors who find themselves on opposing sides stop speaking with one another. This is how opposing groups rid themselves of social relations that might interfere with action. It should also be noted that Coleman makes an assumption here that all community members will become part of one of the opposing groups.
(2) Formation of partisan organizations. As the controversy intensifies, ad hoc organizations are formed on each side. These groups are central in terms of communication, planning, and organizing. They also serve as a vehicle for quickly bringing together the group as needed throughout the course of controversy.

(3) Emergence of new leaders. Leaders that have not previously been in that role emerge in controversies. These are often people without long-term connections in the community or community connections that will be impacted by an extremist leadership role in the controversy.

(4) Community organizations are drawn into the controversy. While local organizations often struggle to maintain neutrality, they are increasingly drawn into the controversy. As members of community organizations are increasingly polarized into opposing groups, organizations cannot help but feel the controversy. Sometimes organizations feel pressured to join one side or the other.

(5) Increased word of mouth communication. As the controversy progresses formal media sources cannot keep up with events. Community members become more reliant on word of mouth communication. This street-corner source has no control over reliability of information, which can intensify the rhetoric of the controversy.

Factors Influencing the Course of Controversy. Coleman is not proposing that once set in motion a controversy necessarily spirals through these dynamics. Rather, through conscious effort or as a result of particular community conditions the development of a community controversy may be interrupted. He points out the local structure of authority, the social structure of the community and other differences in communities have the ability to shape the course of community controversy.
Nearly two decades after he proposed the dynamics of controversy examined here, Coleman proposed another construct for examining social action. In The Mathematics of Collective Action (1973), he explores a quantitative statistical process that supports a theory of purposive social action. He points out that within social action there are two paths taken by theorists: that of causal determinants of behavior and that of purposive behavior. In the first, individuals are viewed as reacting to their environment. Events are seen as imposed from outside. In the second, individuals are viewed as taking rational action based on preferences. An individual perceives that different outcomes will have different impacts for him and actions are available that will effect these outcomes.

Coleman examines a set of concepts within purposive social action: “actors, events, control of actors over events, interest of actors in events (1973:viii). The model of collective action developed is supported using hypothetical quantitative values for concepts such as interest and control. Coleman’s earlier (1957) theory appears based in a course of causal reaction, while in this later work he seems to suggest this is not necessarily the case. There is a role for rational choice within social action. This later theoretical position, however, appears consistent with Coleman’s previous notion (one not extensively elaborated upon in 1957) that once set in motion a controversy does not necessarily have to spiral through the course of events. While he had earlier pointed to the local structure of authority and the social structure of the community as factors that could shape the course of controversy, in this later work it is rational choices that can interrupt or shape the course of controversy.

While Coleman’s later work provides a comprehensive mathematical model of collective action, it also places more emphasis on individual agency and does not elaborate on the earlier concepts of dynamic tendencies in issues and social organizations. It is the
dynamic tendencies in issues and social organizations specific to community controversy from his 1957 model that are examined in this research.

Frames in Dispute

Berger and Luckmann (1966) discussed the process by which a body of knowledge becomes accepted as reality. Their premise is that through their interactions, people continually create a shared reality that moves from the subjective to the objective. When individuals internalize this created and shared reality, they are both conforming to the expectations of social institutions and at the same time are re-creating those institutions.

Berger and Luckman's notion of reality is similar to that of 'frame' found in the work of Goffman (1974). He used the term to denote “schemata of interpretation” that allows individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” things that occur in their lives and the larger world (1974:21). Frames organize individual experiences and subsequently guide actions, both individual and collective. There are also times when there is dispute between frames (Goffman, 1974). A frame dispute occurs when parties with opposing versions openly disagree over the definition of what is taking place. Eventually, one position will either convince or dominate the other, but in the interim, there is a period of frame dispute. There are clear connections here between Goffman's notion of frame dispute and the earlier discussion of conflict and controversy.

Snow and Benford (1988, 1992) extend the work of Goffman and framing in their examination of social movements and mobilization of individuals in social movement organizations. They propose framing as a useful tool for examining social change and collective action, and define a frame as
an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environments (1992:137).

A specific frame is not static, but is an ongoing interactive ideology. Snow and Benford (1988) further identify three functions performed by frames within collective action: identification of problems and cause, identification of tactics and strategies, and identification of the reasons for action. The first performs the diagnostic function, the second serves a prognostic function, and the final function is that of motivation.

*Diagnostic Framing.* Frames identify the problem, the cause, and attribute blame. Of these three functions of diagnostic framing, group consensus is more likely to be achieved in terms of problem identification than in attribution of blame.

*Prognostic Framing.* Frames also offer solutions to the problem, including tactics and strategies for reaching the solution. While not necessarily the case, in most instances the prognostic function of framing closely follows the diagnostic function.

*Motivational Framing.* This is the rationale for action within the frame. While in some cases the motivation to act follows the first two functions, in other cases there needs to be a prompt for action in the organization's frame.

While Snow and Benford's work is clearly focused on social movement organizations, it is suggested here that it is applicable to mobilizing individuals in community controversies. Snow and Benford suggest social movements "frame, or assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists (1988:198)." I use the three functions of framing they have put forth as a construct for
examining frames in community controversies surrounding production practices in animal agriculture.

**Frames and Agriculture**

Community controversies with respect to livestock production practices represent periods of frame dispute. Frames of interpretation are contradictory in terms of the direction local producers should take.

Agrarian collective action throughout the history of the United States reflects three master frames - agrarian fundamentalism, competitive capitalism, and the producer frame (Mooney and Hunt, 1997). While there are bridges between these frames, these three perspectives have been consistent in U.S. agriculture since colonial times. Within the agrarian fundamentalist frame, agriculture organized around an individual owner is viewed as central to the family, equality, freedom, democracy, and preserving equality. But Mooney and Hunt suggest agrarian fundamentalism departs from the traditional agrarianism associated with Thomas Jefferson in two ways. First, the importance of small family farms diminishes, as does the significance of the organization of agriculture. Second, as agriculture is increasingly commercialized, towns are viewed as more dependent on the patronage of farms, and there is a potential benefit for local business and community associated with large-scale production. Although the competitive capitalism frame is based on a free market ideology, it relies on state intervention to maintain competition. The state is called upon to create an even playing field by breaking up monopolies. Within the producer frame direct producers should benefit from the rewards of production, rather than non-producers
who provide off-farm mental labor. Specifically pointed to as exploitive are wage-labor production and tenant farming.

Beus and Dunlap (1990) propose a model that clarifies the two dominant paradigms that have emerged within contemporary agriculture. These paradigms were derived through analysis of the work of leading proponents of conventional and alternative agriculture and present ideal or polar types (Table 1). Conventional agriculture refers to mainstream “capital-intensive, large-scale, highly mechanized agriculture with monocultures of crops and extensive use of artificial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, with intensive animal husbandry” (Knorr and Watkins, 1984:x). Beus and Dunlap point out that alternative agriculture is more difficult to define due to the diversity of this group, yet there is commonality in the underlying philosophy that is held. There is a preference for reduced use of farm chemicals, small farms, reduced technology and energy, self-sufficiency, and conservation of resources. Citing Buttel et al. (1986) this group includes organic, sustainable, regenerative, and low input agriculture; ecoagriculture; permaculture; biodynamics; agroecology; and natural farming.

Beus and Dunlap suggest all components of the current debate in agriculture fall within six dimensions. The first three dimensions (centralization vs. decentralization; dependence vs. independence; and competition vs. community) have been part of the ongoing agrarianism vs. industrialism debate throughout American history. The last three dimensions (domination of nature vs. harmony with nature; specialization vs. diversity; and exploitation vs. restraint) present a new emphasis, the ecological aspects that are at the core of alternative agriculture.
Table 1. Key Elements in Competing Agricultural Paradigms
(Beus and Dunlap, 1990:598-9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Agriculture</th>
<th>Alternative Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centralization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Decentralization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/international production, processing, and marketing</td>
<td>More local/regional production, processing, and marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated populations; fewer farmers</td>
<td>Dispersed populations; more farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated control of land, resources and capital</td>
<td>Dispersed control of land, resources and capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Independence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large, capital-intensive production units and technology</td>
<td>Smaller, low-capital production units and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy reliance on external sources of energy, inputs and credit</td>
<td>Reduced reliance on external sources of energy, inputs, and credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumerism and dependence on the market</td>
<td>More personal and community self-sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary emphasis on science, specialists and experts</td>
<td>Primary emphasis on personal knowledge, skills, and local wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cooperation; self-interest</td>
<td>Increased cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm traditions and rural culture out-dated</td>
<td>Preservation of farm traditions and rural culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small rural communities not necessary to agriculture</td>
<td>Small rural communities essential to agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm work a drudgery, labor an input to be minimized</td>
<td>Farm work rewarding; labor an essential to be made meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming is a business only</td>
<td>Farming is a way of life as well as a business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary emphasis on speed, quantity, and profit</td>
<td>Primary emphasis on permanence, quality, and beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domination of nature</strong></td>
<td><strong>Harmony with nature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humans are separate from and superior to nature</td>
<td>Humans are part of and subject to nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature consists primarily of resources to be used</td>
<td>Nature is valued primarily for its own sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-cycle incomplete, decay (recycling wastes) neglected</td>
<td>Life-cycle complete; growth and decay balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human-made systems imposed on nature</td>
<td>Natural ecosystems are imitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production maintained by agricultural chemicals</td>
<td>Production maintained by development of healthy soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly processed, nutrient-fortified food</td>
<td>Minimally processed, naturally nutritious food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Diversity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow genetic base</td>
<td>Broad genetic base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most plants grown in monocultures</td>
<td>More plants grown in polycultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-cropping in succession</td>
<td>Multiple crops in complementary rotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation of crops and livestock</td>
<td>Integration of crops and livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized production systems</td>
<td>Locally adapted production systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly specialized, reductionistic science and technology</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary, systems-oriented science and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploitation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Restraint</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External costs often ignored</td>
<td>All external costs must be considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term benefits outweigh long-term consequences</td>
<td>Short-term and long-term outcomes equally important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on heavy use of nonrenewable resources</td>
<td>Based on renewable resources; nonrenewable resources conserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great confidence in science and technology</td>
<td>Limited confidence in science and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High consumption to maintain economic growth</td>
<td>Consumption restrained to benefit future generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial success; busy lifestyles; materialism</td>
<td>Self-discovery; simpler lifestyles; nonmaterialism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The conventional-alternative agriculture model has served as the basis for many examinations of agriculture over the last decade. One of these is the work of Chiappe and Flora (1998), who suggest the alternative agriculture paradigm Beus and Dunlap outline excludes perspectives regarding sustainability held by women. They found the six dimensions – independence, decentralization, community, harmony with nature, diversity, and restraint - are all consistent with perspectives held by women in alternative agriculture. However, they note differences in content.

Individual self-reliance did not emerge as a theme. Decentralization was closely linked both to what was produced and to who consumed it. Independence was expressed in terms of family and community. Community meant connectedness and commitment to place. Connection to nature was expressed in terms of 'knowing' and 'feeling' based on locality. Diversity was primarily expressed in the crops they produced themselves and the way that crop diversity replicated biodiversity in nature. And restraint was focused on technologies of thrift, as well as non-materialism (1998:387).

Chiappe and Flora also identify two dimensions from the perspectives of women in alternative agriculture that Beus and Dunlap did not include (Table 2). Quality family life was a dimension central to alternative agriculture. Using alternative practices was viewed as improving family health and the environment, reducing household stress, and increasing free time to be spent with family members (a contradiction to the common interpretation of alternative agriculture as more time-intensive). They also pointed to the dimension of spirituality or religiosity as integral to alternative agriculture practices, both connected to traditional religious backgrounds and to harmony with nature as consistent with the alternative paradigm.
In this research the frames identified in community controversies surrounding animal agriculture practices will be compared to the eight dimensions of the conventional-alternative paradigm of Beus and Dunlap as modified by Chiappe and Flora.

**Table 2. Additional Dimensions of the Alternative Agriculture Paradigm**  
(Chiappe and Flora, 1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Agriculture</th>
<th>Alternative Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Family Life</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved family health due to safer farming practices and reduced reliance on chemicals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced off-farm employment and more time with family members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spirituality/Religiosity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative agriculture consistent with stewardship of the land as part of traditional religion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony and connectedness to the rhythms of nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER III.

CHANGE IN ANIMAL AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION AND
SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACTS

The preceding chapter reviewed community controversy, framing and frame dispute literature. These concepts are brought together in this examination of community controversy related to production practices in animal agriculture. This chapter reviews the recent literature addressing change in animal agriculture and community and social impacts.

Concentration, Coordination and Integration

Since the beginning of the 1900s there has been an almost constant pattern of change in agriculture marked by a decline in the number of producers. In the past two decades livestock sectors of U.S. agriculture have undergone rapid transformation, characterized by production concentrated in fewer farms with increased levels of production (Albrecht, 1997). Change has featured not only rapid decline in number of farms with an increased scale of production, but also growing concentration of market power among relatively few individuals and increased vertical or contractual integration (Buttel and Jackson-Smith 1997).

We have seen changes in the ownership arrangements of all agricultural production with an increase in the number of U.S. farms owned by corporations. Growth in family-owned corporations was the greatest among all farm ownership arrangements from 1978 to 1992 (Table 3). While the number of individual or family proprietors and partnerships declined significantly, family and non-family corporations and other ownership arrangements
increased the most. It is worth noting that while the total numbers markedly changed, the proportion of farms owned by individual or family proprietors did not change significantly over the 15-year period.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership Arrangement</th>
<th>1978 Number / Percent of Total</th>
<th>1992 Number / Percent of Total</th>
<th>% Change in number 1978-1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual or Family Proprietors</td>
<td>1,965,860 87%</td>
<td>1,653,491 86%</td>
<td>- 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships</td>
<td>232,538 10%</td>
<td>186,806 10%</td>
<td>- 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Corporations</td>
<td>44,413 2%</td>
<td>64,528 3%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Family Corporations</td>
<td>5,818 less than 1%</td>
<td>8,039 less than 1%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ownership Arrangements</td>
<td>9,146 less than 1%</td>
<td>12,436 less than 1%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Farms</td>
<td>2,257,775</td>
<td>1,925,300</td>
<td>- 15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Land ownership for all but totally integrated poultry and hog production remains in the hands of farm families and their heirs. What varies is the ownership of the animals (Welsh and Hubbell 1999). Remnants of farmers' experiences during the Great Depression, when foreclosures were high and land was owned by a few, are still evident in Minnesota. A statute enacted at that time prevented any corporation from owning more than 5,000 acres of farmland (Welsh 1998). The threat that farming will become dominated by corporations has resonated in public policy, although nearly 9 of 10 farm operations remain family-controlled. Minnesota is now one of several major agricultural states with 'anti-corporate farming' laws on the books (Welsh, 1998). The specifics differ from state to state, however, the general theme of these laws is to prohibit large, publicly traded and transnational corporations from
engaging in agricultural production. Family-owned and operated farms are permitted to form partnerships and corporations for legal and financial reasons. Those who support such laws feel this protects family-owned operations from unfair competition from large corporations. Those opposed suggest they prevent capital investment in rural areas and encourage investment in other locations (potentially outside of the U.S.). Moreover, some question the effectiveness of these laws in preventing corporations from controlling agricultural production (Welsh 1998). While this prohibits large, publicly traded and transnational corporations from engaging in agricultural production, as contract production becomes a feature of the agricultural landscape, ownership and control of the animals is in the hands of an off-site entity. These firms essentially engage farm workers, including family-farmers to grow ‘products’.

Change specific to ownership and structure of animal agriculture brings to the fore questions of how we define agriculture. Perhaps what has been a conceptual difficulty in adequately defining ‘rural’ has expanded to include our definition of ‘agriculture’. Burmeister (2000) points to two different visions of rural reality. From one perspective there are citizens who view rurality and the future of what they define as rural areas as one of multiple-uses, based in historical concepts of traditional agricultural production. In contrast is the position that agricultural development with a high-tech approach is the foundation of present and future successful rural development. While differences in perceived rural realities manifest themselves in local struggles over regulation of animal agriculture, this may reflect a broader political struggle over the future of rural areas. Friedland (2000) suggests intensive animal production, more closely related to an industrial approach, is better
defined as *agribusiness*. He distinguishes this from *agriculture* that we historically associate with small-scale, family-based processes.

There has also been a change in the proximity of animal production to processing facilities. Meatpacking plants have historically been located in metropolitan areas of the eastern Midwest (e.g., Chicago, Green Bay). There has recently been a shift in plant expansions to rural areas of the Corn Belt, a shift that follows the migration of livestock production to less densely populated areas (Raper, Cheney and Punjabi, 2000). Three trends mark changes in meat processing plants (Henry, 2000). Livestock production is increasingly linked to beef and hog processing plants. Large-scale integration of hog production and increases in wages at small plants are driving a trend toward large plant size and increasing scale in slaughter. And meatpacking is becoming concentrated in rural areas due to transportation cost savings between production and processing sites and lower non-union wages.

Along with the number, size, ownership, and location of animal production sites, some suggest the location of risk and reward in farming is changing (Harl, 1998). Potential benefits in agricultural production are highest for those with the greatest risk - as are the potential misfortunes. Individual producers have traditionally been in this position by controlling virtually all aspects of animal production. Nevertheless, some postulate the location of risk and reward is increasingly moving to an off-farm person or corporation.

Coordination between agricultural production and processing also impacts the degree that risk/reward is moved off-farm. There is an increase in the degree of coordination between these two processes in the United States. This increase generally takes the form of vertical integration. When companies vertically integrate they control two or more stages of
industrial production. Rather than raising livestock and selling it in the marketplace to a processor, the company simply transfers the livestock from one corporate unit (production) to another (processing). Farm workers are paid employees rather than owners. Individual workers understand their responsibilities, but knowledge and decision-making for the entire production process is held by those working off the farm.

Vertical integration also occurs through a system of contracts between companies and commodity producers. Contracts take the form of marketing contracts and production contracts. In a marketing contract, the producer agrees to sell product to a specific buyer according to a specific schedule. Most grain and milk contracts in the U.S. take this form. Production contracts are used for livestock and poultry and specify production practices. The integrator contracts with the grower to raise livestock to a specified market weight under a standard set of conditions. Production contracts take many forms, and growers are paid in a variety of configurations including incentives and bonuses. In most contract production the company controls nearly all aspects of production including ownership of the animals. Production contracts routinely clarify the grower is an independent contractor and not an employee. This has important implications in terms of taxes, unemployment benefits, production facilities, and employee liability. Because contracts remove so much autonomy from the producer, some question if this is a contract situation or an employee-employer relationship (Becker and Haas, 1996).

It is suggested that when agribusiness firms contract with producers, or contract with intermediary firms who subsequently contract with producers, they are essentially controlling the production level (Welsh 1997). One aspect of contract production is the movement of decision-making from the farm to higher levels in the vertical system. We know that almost
no poultry growers own the birds they raise, and the pork industry is moving in that direction. At this point, the beef cattle industry (prior to the feedlot) remains the most highly controlled at the farm level.

In Kentucky the fulcrum of debate for four years has been a proposed joint liability provision within state regulations (Burmeister, 2000). This provision would make corporations who retain ownership of animals (integrators), but contract with farmers to raise them (contractees), jointly liable for resultant environmental damages or production facility closings. Burmeister suggests Kentucky's joint liability provision is the ultimate public policy impact in terms of regulation. It reflects a societal attempt to control the social risk of changes in animal agriculture. Large-scale confinement production illustrates how new technology can pose greater social hazards than traditional production methods. It is also an example of how old risks of 'capital flight' are socially controlled.

Welsh (1997) attempted to quantify the movement of decision-making control off the farm from 1960 to 1994. The index he developed (Table 4) clearly points out the transfer of coordination and decision-making control varies, depending on the commodity system. While feed grains remain relatively uncoordinated, poultry has the highest degree of coordination. Both cattle and hogs increased in level of coordination and off-farm control from 1980 to 1994, but were far from the degree of coordination in the poultry industry. However, hogs had the most increase in off-farm control from 1960 to 1993/4.

Hayenga et al. (2000) looked at the impact of production and market contracts in Minnesota and found it was the largest farms (those with gross annual sales of $500,000 or more) who comprise over half of the production under contracts. Yet they account for only
Table 4. Index Reflecting Movement of Decision-Making Control Off the Farm  
(Welsh, 1997:496)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1993/4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feed Grains</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fed Cattle</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broilers</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkeys</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index ranges from 0 to 3. Zero indicates all production is for open markets (least control transferred); 3 means all production is vertically integrated (most control transferred).

The index assigns a value of 0 to open markets, 1 to marketing contracts, 2 to production contracts, and 3 to vertically integrated production. The index does not account for the differences between production-management and resource-providing contracts.

one percent of all farms with contract arrangements. While contracting can shift the risk from farmers to off-farm contractors, there is a loss of independence and possible reward for the grower. For specialized growers with a large investment in equipment and buildings, there may be a sense of having no other options at the time of contract renewal, giving processors an advantage in the bargaining process. Producers who have not entered contract arrangements are faced with increasingly limited access to markets, again limiting their options.

It is important to note that despite the attention it is given, not all contracting within animal agriculture is originated by firm-based integrators. Farmer to farmer contracting has played a major role in the Midwest throughout the past decade. Rich (2000) looked at farm-based hog contractors in Illinois and found these are primarily relationships based in social or
family networks that are more personal in nature. Much of the relationship is based on personal integrity, honesty, and trust. In some ways this type of contracting confuses the roles of stakeholders. While contractees are not employees in a legal sense, they certainly receive a fee that is comparable to wages. At the same time, 60% of contractors he interviewed considered their contractees "partners". Contractors understand the awkward relationship they have with contractees, and point to tensions that arise due to the role confusion.

Treatment of Farm Animals

Concern for farm animal welfare has been voiced at various times in the United States since at least the 1870s, but contemporary legislative reform surrounding the issue has been more actively pursued in Europe over the past two decades (Baumgartner 1993). Troughton and Leckie (2000) suggest the least discussed aspects of changes in animal production in the United States are the conditions where livestock are confined. While the public expresses great concern for the well being of domesticated animals, there is very little concern for the welfare of farm animals in this country. Images of farmyards purveyed in children's books, and the rural idyll held by adults combine to create a false perception of current livestock practices. Having previously focused on laboratory animals and endangered wild species, animal-rights groups are increasingly turning their attention to the welfare of farm animals. A partial list of U.S. citizen groups working to reform the welfare of farm animals includes the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the Farm Animal Reform Movement (FARM), the Food Animals Concerns Trust (FACT), the Humane Farming Association (HFA), Chickens Lib, and Humans Against Rabbit Exploitation (HARE) (Jasper and Nelkin, 1992).
A 1999 nationwide poll conducted on behalf of the Humane Society of the United States (Lake Snell Perry & Associates, 1999) indicates public concern about the treatment of animals on “factory farms.” Seventy-seven percent of those surveyed had strong concerns about abuse and inhumane treatment of poultry and livestock in confined production settings. Additional concerns were use of unhealthy chemicals and drugs in farm animals, pollution from animal waste, and the impact of industrialized production on small family farms. An examination of beliefs held by vegetarians regarding benefits of their food choice (Kalof et al., 1999) found the only significant predictor of vegetarianism is a belief that this diet is not as harmful to the environment as one that includes meat. Further, respondents with a rural childhood were less likely to believe animal cruelty is prevented by vegetarianism.

Federal and state governments have recently taken action related to treatment of farm animals. A bill introduced to the U.S. Senate in June 2001 would push for enforcement of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act of 1958. The bill results from a Washington Post investigation that identified repeated violations of the Act with little intervention on the part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The article pointed to a Texas beef company that had repeated violations — 22 violations in 1998, including chopping hooves off live cattle. The article pointed out the USDA discontinued tracking violations of the Human Slaughter Act in 1998. In addition, in January 2001 the New Jersey legislature directed the State Department of Agriculture to develop guidelines for humane treatment of farm animals, addressing all phases of animal production and processing. It will specifically target confinement practices in poultry, veal and swine (Farm Sanctuary, 2000).

There is also some indication that consumers are willing to pay more for animal products produced in an environment considered more humane. In their review of consumer
viewpoints on animal welfare, Swanson and Mench (2000) indicate people express a
disparate range of viewpoints regarding poultry production. While consumers generally
express confidence in the decision making of producers, they also increasingly consider
humane treatment of animals to be important. They point to research indicating at least some
consumers will pay more for animal products produced in a humane manner. And in a
nationwide survey of consumers, Zogby American (2000) found most respondents would pay
more for eggs produced in a setting where the hens were treated humanely. They suggest the
economic inputs from retailers and consumers must be considered as a way to offset the costs
of changing industrialized animal production practices. They also found most respondents
felt housing hens in small wire cages that prevent them from comfortably moving about was
unacceptable, as was reducing their food to induce molting.

Implications for Producers and Communities

Transformation in animal production reflects a process of restructuring that has
important implications for producers and the communities in which farms are embedded. In
the 1990s North Carolina became a new center of the hog industry, accounting for 37 percent
of the increase in the national inventory on farms with at least 200 hogs. But other states,
including Minnesota, experienced rapid increases in their hog inventory in the 1990s as well
(Zering, 1998). In Minnesota the pork industry has traditionally relied on family farm
production, with an average of 500 to 999 head. These operations were part of a diversified
farming strategy that included row crops. In Minnesota the number of farms selling hogs
decreased from 13,749 to 7,717 between 1992 and 1997 (U.S. Department of Commerce,
1997). Over the same period the number of hogs sold increased from 9,141,699 to
Both the number of hogs sold and the number of farms selling hogs decreased in 50 Minnesota counties, while the number of hogs sold increased and the number of farms selling hogs decreased in 35 counties.

Research generally relates the size of livestock operation to indicators of community well-being such as employment and income. A study in the Great Plains and west of the Missouri River examined how four different kinds of agricultural systems affect the economic welfare of agricultural communities (Flora and Flora, 1987). Large-scale livestock counties were the least likely of the four farming systems studied to generate economically healthy communities. They had fewer retail sales per capita, fewer wholesale establishments, lower median family income in both 1969 and 1979, and a larger proportion of the population in poverty. The analysis also indicated large-scale livestock counties had the highest number of families below the poverty line in both 1969 and 1979. However, the percent in poverty declined more rapidly than in other agricultural counties, suggesting the poor had either left the county or new income generation mechanisms had been introduced. These findings are dependent in part on the expansionary agricultural setting of the 1970s when producers, benefiting in part from improved pricing and liberal lending practices, were expanding operations at a heightened pace. Expansion had an initial positive impact on agriculture-related businesses in rural settings. These findings are consistent with other studies looking at effects of structural changes in agriculture on county vitality and viability nationally (Lobao, 1990).

Posing the question, “Is it better to have fewer large farms or more small farms?” researchers at the University of Iowa emphasized the need for empirical studies on the livestock/community nexus to inform policies and implement strategies that can enhance
rather then diminish the social and economic well being of producers and communities (Durrenberger and Thu, 1996). One such study is that of the Wisconsin livestock industry. Researchers there provide evidence of the relationship between community well being and technology, markets, and concentration of livestock on a few relatively large farms (Buttel and Jackson-Smith 1997). This examination attempted to throw light on recent debates in Wisconsin regarding the role industrialized or large-scale animal agriculture will (or should) play in the Wisconsin livestock sector. The research sought to determine how farmers felt about expansion in the livestock industry and elicited their views on a wide range of related issues. Researchers conducted a survey of randomly selected Wisconsin farmers and found farmers were lukewarm toward livestock expansion. Only 17 percent of the respondents perceived expansion in the livestock industry as a good initiative, while 45 percent perceived it to be negative. Farmer respondents were least supportive of expansion in the hog and poultry sectors. Wisconsin farmers' views towards livestock expansion were not shaped primarily by concerns about the environment, but by concerns about farm structure in their state. Responses indicate strong support for family-scale operations as opposed to industrial, non-farm investor operations. The authors conclude that most farmers who oppose livestock expansion do so because of a strong concern that it would erode the status of family farming in the state.

In rural areas of the Midwest, including Minnesota, farmers are disadvantageously impacted due to their increasing minority status compared to non-farmers in rural unincorporated areas. This is due to their relative inability to move their operations to another, more isolated location. Their ties to the land they own and the locality in which they have invested a lifetime of experiences are strong, ties they are unwilling to break. And at
the same time the public has an increased interest in and influence on animal agriculture operations, yet fewer people have ties to production agriculture (University of Minnesota, 2001).

Economic Impact

In Illinois, Gomez and Zhang (2000) looked at rural growth and the impact of large swine farms. They found large hog farms hindered economic growth in rural communities in several measures. In Wisconsin, Foltz and Chen (2000) considered economic impacts of changes in the dairy industry on rural communities. They looked specifically at feed purchases by Wisconsin dairy farmers. While they found the percent of feed purchased locally has a negative relationship with herd size (consistent with popular presumption) there was a more significant indicator of local purchasing. The researchers noted physical and what they termed “psychic” distance from the community were greater indicators of local purchasing patterns than herd size. Farmers who lived physically closer to town and those who felt a greater attachment to the community were more likely to purchase their feed locally. They point to social factors as having the most significant influence on purchasing decisions.

Chism and Levins (1994) took on a comparable examination in Minnesota. They found local spending was not related to gross sales volume on crop farms, however local farm-related expenditures fell sharply when the scale of livestock operations increased. It appeared there was a certain base amount of local spending, no matter what the size. However, as operations became larger additional spending was completed outside the area.
Impact on Community Infrastructure

Studies of broader changes taking place in agriculture link housing, public services, natural resources and land use, and historical and cultural resources to the changing structure of animal agriculture. North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD) research in Oklahoma (2000) found housing rental rates increased nearly 85 percent over seven years in the county where animal production and meatpacking expansion occurred, compared to a 61 percent increase in comparison counties. The influx of new workers also resulted in a 47 percent decrease in availability of housing. The combined result was overcrowding and shared housing situations, or commuting from neighboring counties with available and more affordable housing. The same research notes important implications for community educational institutions. While total school enrollment increased 12 percent (resulting in construction of a new elementary school), there was a 125 percent increase in the number of bilingual or limited English speaking students. Despite an 81 percent increase in the county school budget between 1990 and 1997, both dropout rates and student/teacher ratios increased. Community costs due to increased demand on services, such as court costs from increased criminal and civil cases; law enforcement costs; and applications for public assistance and food stamps were also noted.

Other research points to additional costs of large-scale animal production to community resources, such as impacts on tourism and recreation due to livestock odors (McMillan and Schulman 2001); and deterioration of bridges and hard surface roads (Constance 2000).
Impact on Individual Well Being

Quality of life issues related to the structure and scale of agriculture were examined as early as the 1940s in Goldschmidt's (1947) comparison of California communities. Quality of life factors similarly permeate recent literature where large-scale animal agriculture operations are examined in the context of social and community impacts. Quality of life is related to perceptions of 1) having alternatives in what one does on a daily or life cycle basis, and 2) being respected by family and communities of interest and place.

In his examination of large-scale chicken production in East Texas, Constance (2000) took into account quality of life indicators. Among those living near locations of chicken barns, 90 percent indicated the operations had a negative impact on their overall quality of life. In terms of having day-to-day alternatives, more than three-quarters had to restrict their outdoor activities and keep windows closed due to the chicken barns. About one-third had attempted to move from their homes due to livestock odors. In terms of being respected by family and community, more than half noted a decrease in visits to their homes from family and friends, and 80 percent experienced increased neighborhood tension. More than one-third had lost friends because of local controversy over the chicken barns.

Kleiner, Rikoon and Seipel (2000) examined social capital in four northern Missouri counties. They found perceived county conditions rather than physical proximity to production facilities more closely related to elements of social capital. In the two counties where large-scale corporately owned swine operations were dominant, citizens expressed more negative attitudes regarding elements of trust, neighborliness, community division, networks of acquaintanceship, democratic values, and community involvement. The county dominated by independently owned swine operations had the most positive attitudes.
regarding the elements of trust, neighborliness, community division, and networks of acquaintanceship.

The NCRCRD (2000) research in Oklahoma also examined individual security in terms of crime, and community conflict in terms of civil court cases. In this Oklahoma county the overall crime rate increased dramatically between 1990 and 1997, the most significant being violent crimes that increased 378 percent. Comparison farming-dependent counties that did not experience dramatic changes in animal agriculture saw an average 29 percent decrease in violent crimes over the same period. Theft related crimes also increased in the focal county by 64 percent, compared to a decrease of 11 percent in comparison counties. In terms of community conflict, civil court cases increased in the county by 7 percent, while they decreased 11 percent in comparison counties. The sense of division between town and country residents increased between 1990 and 1998, and there was an increasing lack of trust and communication and a collapse of traditional processes of social control.

Implications of change in livestock production related to enjoyment of property in surrounding rural communities tends to dominate the non-academic literature, and these implications are broadly addressed in academic journals as well. Odor emissions are most often cited as factors in prohibiting enjoyment of property. Using the Profile of Mood States (POMS), Schiffman et al. (1995) attempted to determine the effect of environmental odors emanating from confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in North Carolina on the mood of nearby residents. The scores for six POMS factors and the total mood disturbance (TMD) score for 44 experimental subjects were compared to those of 44 control subjects who were matched according to gender, race, age and years of education. The results indicated a
significant difference between control and experimental subjects for all six POMS factors and the TMD. Persons living near the CAFOs who experienced the odors reported significantly more tension, more depression, more anger, less vigor, more fatigue, and more confusion than control subjects. Persons exposed to odors also had more total mood disturbance than control subjects as determined by their ratings on the POMS.

A Dutch study designed along similar lines, measured odor emission and dispersion and related these measurements to data from a survey of individuals in residential areas nearby (Miedema and Ham 1988). Three odor sources were examined: a rapeseed oil extraction facility, an electric wire insulation factory, and a pig farm. Findings indicated increasing odor highly correlated with residents' increased annoyance. Higher odor levels were correlated with behaviors or conditions such as having to shut windows, being prevented from sleeping, having to avoid deep breaths, and headaches. This was as true for the individuals living near pig farms as for individuals living near the other facilities.

Margolis (1992) explicitly explored the nature of neighborly relationships and the boundary problem that exists with environmental elements that are "unbounded," like odor and sound. In this case, exploring how sound can be used to claim physical space and establish social boundaries among neighbors. Because a person cannot inexpensively move from a neighborhood they view as being invaded by unpleasant noise or odor caused by a neighbor, conflict is likely to result. But Lohr (1996) found a social element in the degree of annoyance. There were three variables among neighbors of a swine farm that negatively correlated with degree of odor annoyance: the length of time they had lived in their current residence, previous contact with the farmer, and economic dependence on farming.
In his examination of the impact of chicken-production facilities on Texas communities, Constance (2000) found almost all neighbors of the chicken barns had a sense of belonging to the community and did not wish to move. Yet they felt neighborliness and trust had decreased, and their community had become less desirable. They pointed to the advent of the poultry industry as the reason for these changes. Palmer and Bewley (1999) also considered neighbor relations in their examination of Wisconsin dairy operator expansions. They were interested in the changes made as they related to various aspects of producer satisfaction. They found that between 1994 and 1998 the average herd size of those who expanded their operations had doubled. While most (72%) expanded by adding on to existing facilities, those who were most satisfied with their expansion built all new facilities. However, producers who did not change their type of dairy facility had significantly better relations with neighbors than those with all new facilities. In other words, while building all new facilities provided the greatest producer perceived benefit, adding on to existing facilities resulted in greater neighbor benefits. In addition, producers with larger herd sizes were more satisfied with all aspects of their operations - personal satisfaction, personal health, household income, family relationships, time away from the farm, and overall quality of life - with one exception. Those with smaller herds were more satisfied with their neighborhood relationships.

Studies looking at animal agriculture within the context of demographics also suggest a link between low income, predominantly minority communities and the proximal location of confined animal feeding operations (Collin et al. 1995; Epstein 1995; McMillan and Schulman 2001; Wing et al. 1996). For example Eastern North Carolina, which is low in
both income and political influence but has a high concentration of African-Americans, is now home to 95% of the state's hog population (Ladd and Edwards 2001).

Community Power and Leadership

There are a number of classic and recent community studies that indicate ownership and control of industry in rural areas, including in animal agriculture, influences power relations and leadership in communities. More than half a century ago Goldschmidt (1947) looked at agricultural production in his comparison of rural California communities where the structure and size of farms were different. He found that in the town where farms were larger and industrialized (using employed farm workers), there was increased social and institutional segregation, and farm owners (with ties to outside influences) controlled social processes rather than farm workers. Where farms were small family-owned and operated enterprises, there was a higher degree of citizen involvement in control of social processes. More recently, Duncan (1999) found concentrated local ownership of agriculture was related to ineffective local institutions and non-existent local leadership in the Mississippi Delta.

As previously noted, beginning in the 1980s Eastern North Carolina saw tremendous growth in the hog industry through contract and corporate production facilities and meatpacking plants. Citizens there perceive this left them with an altered power structure, where the interests of large pork producers dominate those of constituents at all levels of government (McMillan and Schulman 2001; Thu and Durrenberger 1994). Neighbors of chicken-production facilities in Texas expressed a similar sentiment. While more than 90 percent felt poultry industry regulation was not adequate, only 53 percent thought the government would increase regulations in the coming years (Constance 2000).
In Minnesota, Olson et al. (1996) found both farmers and non-farming citizens were dissatisfied with state agencies and local planning and land use regulations. Both groups suggested that state agencies need to work *with* people, and local elected and appointed officials need to base their land use decisions on “facts and findings.” While there were otherwise clear differences in the perspectives of these two groups in regard to animal agriculture, there was clear consensus in their criticism of state and local government entities.

In terms of voluntary community associations, the literature includes many case examples of local groups forming in opposition to animal agriculture production systems. In Michigan, DeLind (1995) found local associations that emerged in opposition to the restructuring of hog production. In Eastern North Carolina Ladd and Edwards (2001) found a similar pattern. And in East Texas Constance (2000) describes the development of a local group formed to oppose large-scale chicken production sites.

**Community Controversy**

Community and neighborhood controversies in the context of agricultural restructuring are finding their way from the front pages of local newspapers to the academic literature (Grey 1995). For those on all sides of complaint and controversy regarding changes in animal agriculture, there appears to be a common frame: that of rights and entitlements. In forthcoming research on the hog industry in North Carolina, McMillan and Schulman (2001) found all parties involved use this master frame in understanding their position. Middle-class white activists have a civic rights frame; they believe the government should protect their rights. For African-American anti-hog activists this is an environmental justice and civil rights frame; they want the same rights as whites. Producers frame their
position in terms of property rights and a right to earn a living from their land. Citizens who are neither producers nor activists frame their position in terms of the right to enjoy their own property. And community leaders are concerned with the right to make a living in terms of both agriculture and industry, as long as this doesn't violate someone else's right to make a living. These different frames, or collective identities, are drawn upon to define one's position relative to the controversy.

Researchers at Sam Houston State University documented actions of anti-CAFO groups in the Texas Panhandle (Constance and Bonanno, 2000). They focused on episodes of resistance carried out by local residents and environmental groups, showing the difficulties associated with reconciling the goal of socioeconomic development in rural areas with protection of the environment and enhancement of quality of life. Residents were primarily motivated by human health and property value concerns. The analysis also documents the corporate response to community resistance, which primarily constituted a reconstruction of the corporate image as environmentally sound.

A similar case study illuminated long and short term effects of conflict generated by the siting of a swine confinement production facility in Michigan (DeLind 1995). Controversy erupted soon after construction of five hog confinement units when the corporation's open-air manure lagoons began emitting a "horrific stench" that compromised the health and quality of life of the neighborhoods surrounding the facility. Local resistance culminated in the emergence of two grassroots organizations and a four-year litigation process. The case study demonstrated consequences of the conflict were anger on the part of community residents, who believed their environment and integrity had been violated, resentment towards public officials, polarization within the community, and a sense of
alienation. Paradoxically, the conflict eventually emerged as a basis of community identity and social cohesion. The perceived assault to quality of life became a basis for increased interdependency among community residents, shared resources, and a sense of mutual responsibility.

Although in the early stages, research in Nebraska (Blankenau and Snowden 2000) is examining how community activism develops against industrialized agriculture in rural areas. They examine a case where local farmers successfully blocked a large corporate owned livestock facility. They were interested in knowing if these local activists made the connections between what was perceived as an immediate threat and the larger social, political, and economic forces behind changes taking place locally. What they found was an understanding of these processes in terms of local impacts, but little recognition of how they operate nationally and internationally. Additionally, the ideologies of groups from outside the local area who also opposed the development did not resonate with rural residents, with one exception. Both the positions of oppositional groups and historically held rural values were in conflict with the value of 'bigger is better'.

Research in North Carolina also considers ideologies of different groups who oppose large animal facilities. Ladd and Edwards (2001) point to a convergence over time of local citizen groups with state and national sustainable agriculture and environmental justice movements in their opposition to confinement hog production facilities. Parallels have been identified between social and environmental justice concerns, the situation of small farmers, food security, sustainable agriculture, and rural community empowerment. They suggest the controversy has the ability to integrate these diverse stakeholders into a single movement. North Carolina environmental justice organizations have already utilized local and state
conflicts regarding hog production facilities to mobilize minority, poor, and marginalized rural communities. At the same time, they point to development of new constituencies on both sides of the swine controversy in North Carolina, as well as an expanding division between these two sets of stakeholders.

Conflict Resolution

While community and neighborhood conflicts in the context of agricultural restructuring are emerging in the literature, there are fewer studies of conflict resolution in communities impacted by restructuring processes. Studies have focused on documenting conflicts and less on ameliorative strategies and conflict resolution alternatives. Dukes (1996) argues for more systematic application of public conflict resolution by policy makers to confront disintegration of community, alienation from government and the inability to solve public disputes. He makes an argument for building transformative practice of dispute resolution that inspires and nurtures community.

One step in this direction is a report prepared for the State of Pennsylvania by Abdalla et al. (2000). It examines alternative resolution strategies for community conflict over intensive livestock operations. They note successful resolution from the stakeholder perspective is based on

1. the perception that any outcomes that are reached will be final and will be implemented by those involved, and
2. the perception that all stakeholders' interests will be reflected in these outcomes (2000:33).

Additionally, procedural issues of civility and respect between stakeholders and increased dialogue influence stakeholders' perceptions of successful resolution. This points to successful resolution from the perspective of community stakeholders as based in both
outcome and process. The report further suggests five processes for communities to resolve disputes over intensive livestock operations - public information meetings, formal review and comment processes, public hearings, consensus seeking processes, and mediation involving a neutral third party. Ultimately this process must increase trust among stakeholders, decrease the sense of risk and uncertainty, increase government fairness (both perceived and in reality), and utilize public participation.

In Minnesota, Robert Koehler of the Extension Service has developed a Community Relations Module based on the work of Peter Sandman, the Iowa Peace Institute, and the work on Conflict Transformation to show how the public responds to the issues and how to do a good neighbor community relations plan. He suggests that for farmers to maintain positive relationships with the public, they must behave in a responsible manner, and then emphasize these actions while increasing public understanding of the livestock industry (University of Minnesota, 2001). Taking a similar approach, the Environmental Assurance Program has been widely distributed by the National Pork Producers Council. The goal has been to avoid conflict by creating understanding and communication to work out problems. It is assumed that the best way to avoid or resolve conflict is to work one-on-one with one's closest neighbors. This model assumes an owner/operator who lives on the farm or at least in the local community.

**Development of Research Objectives**

Chapters II and III have reviewed the academic literature related to community and controversy, frame dispute, changes taking place in animal agriculture and theoretical models for interpreting this change. These topics are brought together in this research.
Change in animal agriculture accelerated over the last two decades, reflecting a process of concentration and restructuring that has important implications for communities in which farms are embedded. At the same time there has been a resurgence of academic and popular interest in studying community. This research supports the notion that contemporary phenomenon, including restructuring in animal agriculture, must be considered within the context of community. Community is defined here as a process of interaction between individuals within a place-based community.

It is recognized that communities engage in both episodes of consensual and conflictual action (Luloff, 1990). Conflict and controversy are just two of the terms used to describe disagreement between groups of individuals within communities. These are regrettably interchanged throughout the literature without significant reference to definition or interpretation. Sanders' definition of community controversy is used in this examination.

Controversy implies the existence of two conditions: (1) an opposition is active and (2) there is some general community involvement. ...in a genuine controversy the legitimizing body is forced to consider opposition arguments to the point that these or the possible political behavior of those advancing them have a bearing upon the decision. The opposition may not defeat the measure, but what they have to say is taken seriously... 'general community involvement' would mean that some citizen or lay behavior, as opposed to professional or official behavior occurred. Where clubs and individuals go out of their way to take a stand pro or con, beyond the call of duty, there are indications of general community involvement. ...There must be people willing to state publicly their reasons for or against the proposal and these people must have arguments or a following significant enough (by numbers, prestige, influence) to be taken into account by the legitimizing body in reaching its decision. (1961:59-60)

The course of community controversy is examined in this research. Coleman (1957) proposed a model that suggests community controversies follow a common path. Specific issues will yield to broader concerns; new issues arise that are quite different from the
original issues; and what begins as disagreement evolves to an antagonistic situation. The model also points to change in social organization as controversy develops in a community. Personal interaction between individuals within each group increases, while interaction between people in opposing groups diminishes. Partisan organizations form that were not in existence prior to the controversy. Extremist leaders emerge who have not previously been considered in this role. Existing community groups are drawn in to the controversy. And communication within the community is increasingly less dependent on formal media sources and more dependent on informal word-of-mouth communication. This model and the elements described are investigated here using community controversy surrounding animal production practices.

Coleman’s model clearly stresses the importance of community members dividing into opposing groups. Through the course of the controversy there is a cycle of mutually reinforcing polarization. The outcome of this “is the division of the community into two socially and attitudinally separate camps, each convinced it is absolutely right (1957:13).” It is suggested here that Coleman is pointing to the different frames of interpretation that emerge in controversies, and the important role they play in propelling the controversy forward. Although Goffman’s (1974) introduction of the concept of ‘frame’ didn’t appear in the academic literature until many years later, the importance of frames in dispute as a component of community controversy links these two sociological concepts. This research clarifies the importance of opposing frames as a component of the course of community controversy. By bringing the concept of frames of interpretation and their functions into the course of community controversy, this research adds an element to Coleman’s model.
Goffman (1974) used the term frame to denote "schemata of interpretation" that allows individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" things that occur in their lives and the larger world (1974:21). Frames organize individual experiences and subsequently guide actions, both individual and collective. Extending the concept of framing, Snow and Benford (1988, 1992) examine social movements and mobilization of individuals in social movement organizations. They propose framing as a useful tool for examining social change and collective action. They identify three functions performed by frames within collective action: identification of problems and cause, identification of tactics and strategies, and identification of the reasons for action (Snow and Benford, 1988). It is suggested here that while Snow and Benford focused on social movement organizations, framing is also applicable to mobilizing individuals at the community level. The diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational functions of framing are used in this research as a construct for defining the opposing frames identified in community controversy.

Frames identified are also compared with the broader frames in debate within agriculture - conventional and alternative agriculture paradigms. Beus and Dunlap (1990) propose all components of the current debate in agriculture fall within six dimensions: centralization vs. decentralization, dependence vs. independence, competition vs. community, domination of nature vs. harmony with nature, specialization vs. diversity, and exploitation vs. restraint. Chiappe and Flora (1998) suggest the alternative agriculture paradigm Beus and Dunlap outline excludes perspectives regarding sustainability held by women, and identify two additional elements - quality family life and spirituality or religiosity. The model of conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms used in this examination is that of Beus and Dunlap as modified by Chiappe and Flora.
In summary, this research examines the course of community controversy surrounding animal production practices. The opposing frames of interpretation identified here play an important role in the course of the controversy. These frames are further compared to the dimensions of dominant paradigms within agriculture to see if there is resonance. The specific objectives of this examination are to

1) examine the degree of support for the pattern of tendencies in community controversy posited by James S. Coleman in 1957 using a type of controversy that has emerged in the last decade, and

2) identify frames in community controversies regarding animal production and compare these with conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms.
CHAPTER IV.

METHODS

This chapter outlines the research methods of this study. It begins with a discussion of the theoretical basis of the methods employed, and concludes with the specific design of data collection.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical basis of the research methods is found in the work of George C. Homans, specifically *The Human Group* (1950). Research within this case method approach begins with a set of observations of "everyday social events" that are described in "ordinary common-sense language". After multiple observations of these social events, elements of behavior are identified from which a set of hypotheses is formed. Homans suggests a process that occurs at three levels.

The first level consists of descriptions of individual events... The second level consists of descriptions of the average behavior of a limited number of persons in a limited area over a limited span of time... The third level consists of descriptions of behavior that may, we hope, apply to many groups, and to persons in many kinds of relationship to one another. (1950:43)

Guiding this process are six rules: 1) Examine the familiar and the obvious. 2) State the obvious in general terms. 3) Specifically address one class of fact at a time. 4) Minimize the number of things observed and talked about at one time, or as Homans puts it, "as few as you may; as many as you must (1950:16).” 5) Thoroughly and systematically, describe the
relationship of the elements observed. 6) Recognize there will be abstraction in analysis that addresses only a minimum number of elements.

Within observation we are looking at elements.

We shall speak of the characteristic they have in common as an element of social behavior, and we shall give it a name, as a mere ticket. It might be called action, if action had not been given a more general meaning, or work, if work did not have a special meaning in the physical sciences and may yet have an analogous one in sociology. Instead of either of these, we shall call it activity, and use it, in much the same way that it is used in everyday speech, as an analytical concept for the study of social groups.

We call activity an element, not implying that it is some ultimate, indivisible atom of behavior. It is no more than one of the classes into which we choose to divide something that might be divided in other, and less crude, ways. In fact we call it an element just because the vagueness of that word gives us room to move around in. Above all we must realize that activity is not a variable like temperature in physics: it cannot be given a single series of numerical values. Instead, a number of aspects of activity might be measured. (1950:34-5)

We begin by identifying elements at the first level. These elements are then organized, or as Homans' suggests, classified. He describes this as differentiating particular classes of fact for examination. This keeps the observations focused.

In sociology we tend to wander all over our material; we never quite know what we are talking about at any particular moment. The reason is not that we are incompetent, but that we have no device for fixing our attention. Any classification, no matter how crude, provided only it is used regularly, forces us to take up one thing at a time and consider systematically the relations of that thing to others. (1950:44-5)

We then proceed to the next level to examine the elements within classes of fact that were identified in the first level. The process then continues on to the third level. The research is systematic and builds upon previous levels. Central to this approach is the notion that theory comes from observation, not the reverse. Using Homans' case method, specific and detailed observations lead the researcher to theory. In other words, a theory expresses
the results of observation. In his introduction to Homans' work, Robert K. Merton describes this process as "What starts as analysis of particulars tentatively ends as synthesis of generalizations (1950:xviii)."

**Research Design**

Congruous with the 1950 case method approach of Homans, this research began by observing one site and episode of community controversy within a Minnesota township. This provides us with the first and second levels of observation within this methodological approach. Two classes of fact were examined: the course of the controversy and the frames in dispute. A set of elements of behavior related to the course of this controversy and the frames in dispute were identified through the observation. These are classified within the dynamics of controversy identified by Coleman (1957) and the functions of frames of interpretation identified by Snow and Benford (1988). Research from a larger group of communities and community controversies were subsequently examined within the same classes of fact, bringing us to the third level of observation suggested by Homans. Elements of behavior from examinations at all levels form the research conclusions.

Consistent with Homans, Babbie (1986) suggests field observation can be a theory-generating activity as well as a data-collection activity. The task is not approached as an opportunity to find support or absence of support for a theory already developed. Rather, it enables the researcher to make sense of the process being observed: making observations, developing tentative conclusions, making more observations, revising the initial conclusions, etc. It becomes an alternating process of induction and deduction.
Several qualitative research methods were employed to enhance scientific validity and reliability in this examination. Data were derived from both original and secondary sources. Original data were collected from personal interviews. Secondary data were gathered through analysis of roundtable transcripts, media accounts, court records, files of state and county agencies, and data from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Commerce Census of Agriculture.

Qualitative research methods were most appropriate for this examination. Field observation is particularly appropriate in examining social processes such as community controversy over time. Field observation "offers the advantage of probing social life in its natural habitat" (Babbie, 1986: 242). It is suggested here that interaction with community members in their own environment was the best method for understanding the course of controversy and the opposing frames. Personal interviews captured nuances of meaning that could not be captured in a questionnaire. The secondary data analysis used in this research both expands and lends support to the personal interviews.

The Case of Frances Township

The episode of controversy in Frances Township was initiated by plans for development of what is legally defined as a feedlot in a rural, unincorporated area. In this case, it was construction of a 2,000-head hog building by the Johnson Family on a 10-acre building site.

1 All place and personal names used are pseudonyms.
This particular community and controversy were selected for multiple reasons. Most important to this research, the controversy in Frances Township was initiated in 1995 and has since ended. This allowed the full course of the controversy to be examined. This was one of the earlier controversies in terms of rural Minnesota disputes over animal production practices. At the same time, it is a recent enough occurrence that community members could recall and discuss the events. The researcher had previously conducted research in this county as part of the GEIS research for the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University\(^2\). This provided substantial background information and assurance that this controversy was not aberrant.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 individuals to clarify the course of this specific community controversy and identify the opposing frames. A snowball sampling process was used, beginning with community members identified through the GEIS research. Letters were sent to 27 identified individuals requesting interviews. Each letter was followed by a telephone call to answer questions and schedule the interview. Two individuals who were contacted declined to be interviewed. One person who agreed to be interviewed was not in her office when the researcher arrived for the appointment and did not return the message left for her. Two people were quite elderly, and when contacted by telephone did not recall receiving the letter and had difficulty understanding why they were being contacted.

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\(^2\) NCRCRD submitted a technical work paper on social and community impacts of animal agriculture for the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Animal Agriculture and the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board based on research in six Minnesota counties. The researcher had responsibility for completing a major portion of this document.
Interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to two hours, and took place in respondents' homes, offices, and local restaurants. Each contact was guided by a standard set of questions that are included in the Appendix. Continuing with the snowball sample, each individual interviewed was asked to provide additional names of people to contact who could inform the research. Interviews continued until research themes became repetitive, at which time interviewing additional people would not have contributed to the study goals. The interview sample included community members who supported the development, opposed the development, and individuals who stated they had no opinion or were not involved in the controversy. Twenty of the 22 individuals interviewed were residents of Frances Township or a neighboring township at the time of the controversy.

The interview questions measure four sets of data related to the two research objectives, to

1) examine the degree of support for the pattern of tendencies in community controversy posited by James S. Coleman in 1957 using a type of controversy that has emerged in the last decade, and

2) identify frames in community controversies regarding animal production, compare these with conventional-alternative paradigms, and explore inferences to gender that appear in community controversy regarding animal production.

The first set of questions (3-6) relates to the context of the examination. These are measures of overall change in animal agriculture and concomitant social and community changes. The community controversy emerged within these contextual factors. These measures relate to the first research objective and Coleman's theory of community controversy. Coleman suggests the context of the community and type of event are important in determining if an incident results in community unification, defeat or controversy.
The second set of questions (7a, 7b, 8, 11, 18 and 19) also relates to the first research objective. These questions measure the dynamic tendencies in issues and social organization in Frances Township related to the course of the community controversy and the personal experiences of the community members being interviewed.

Questions 9a through 10d identify the opposing frames in community controversy related to the second research objective. Frames are defined by the identification of problems and causes, identification of tactics and strategies, and identification of the reasons for action: the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivation functions of collective action frames (Snow and Benford, 1988).

The final set of questions (1, 2, 13-17 and 19) identifies interview respondents in terms of occupation, age, sex, length of residency, and household characteristics. This descriptive information informs both research objectives.

Secondary data analysis in Frances Township included a qualitative examination of newspaper coverage, court documents, and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) records to provide a chronology of the course of the controversy in Frances Township. Twenty-seven months of the local weekly newspaper were reviewed for articles, public notices, and letters to the editor related to the controversy. This covered a period from two months prior to the controversy emergence to one month beyond the end of the public controversy. Records from the MPCA related to the permit for this feedlot and subsequent hearings were reviewed. And court records from the civil case brought by the Johnsons against Frances Township were examined.
Elements of the Case in the Larger Group

Consistent with Homans' model, elements of behavior identified in the study of community controversy in Frances Township were sought in the larger group of communities. Community and community controversies in six counties were examined as part of the GEIS research. These six contexts for examination were selected in conjunction with other researchers in a process that included several criteria (Table 5).

Table 5. Summary of County Selection Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant species</th>
<th>County A</th>
<th>County B</th>
<th>County C</th>
<th>County D</th>
<th>County E</th>
<th>County F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary species select for study</td>
<td>Broilers</td>
<td>Broilers</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of producers for study species 1997*</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent change in number of producers for study species 1987-1997*</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
<td>-26.6%</td>
<td>-28.3%</td>
<td>-40.5%</td>
<td>-13.1%</td>
<td>-17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County inventory of study species 1997*</td>
<td>8,859,329*</td>
<td>10,897,550*</td>
<td>26,602</td>
<td>149,178</td>
<td>3,386</td>
<td>10,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent change in study species inventory 1987-1997*</td>
<td>+41.8%*</td>
<td>+26.9%*</td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent expansion in facilities**</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership structure of study species**</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Family/Networks</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Conflict**</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic area</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Source: Telephone interviews with county officials

Predominant Species. Each of the six case counties has either a predominant or rapidly increasing species, the impact of which was selected for primary examination.  

Although dairy is the predominant species in County A, poultry was selected for investigation as it was determined to be more important in this area than any other area of the state that would provide reliable case analysis. Additionally, there is an overlap with the poultry sector in a neighboring county.
Number and Change in Producers and Inventory of Study Species. All counties selected had a decrease in number of producers for the study species from 1987 to 1997. This change, however, ranges from less than one percent to more than 40 percent. The study species inventory remained the same or increased in all counties over the same period, again with a wide range in change (from no change to a 44 percent increase).

Recent Expansion in Facilities for Predominant Species. Five of the six counties have had recent expansion of facilities within the species selected for study. These expansions provide a situation in which to examine local community conflict or opposition.

Ownership Structure. Four of the six counties have predominantly family owned operations within the species examined, although in one of these counties there are networks of family producers within swine production. In the case of broilers production is almost exclusively through contracts.

Community Conflict. Four of the counties selected have had what was anecdotally described by key informants as "moderate community conflict" regarding animal agriculture. In five of the counties there have been civil lawsuits filed related to construction or expansion of animal facilities in the past five years. Over the same period there were MPCA odor complaints in five of the six counties, ranging by county from 1 to 13 complaints.

County Feedlot Inventory. Four of the six counties are delegated counties with a county feedlot inventory in place. Two are not delegated counties, and do not have a feedlot officer or inventory in place.\(^4\)

\(^4\) The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has a process for delegating authority to local authorities for feedlot oversight. In the remaining counties (those that have not chosen to become delegated) the MPCA retains this responsibility.
Geographic Location. And finally, it was important that the context of this examination include counties from different geographic locations of the state. The six case counties include two from northern Minnesota, two from central Minnesota, and two from southern Minnesota.

Following selection of the study counties, personal interviews were conducted with 12 key informants from the six counties. The semi-structured format of these interviews is included in the Appendix. This question set addressed a broad range of issues regarding community impacts of livestock and poultry production. Key informants in this group included extension educators, feedlot officers, and planning and zoning officials. At the conclusion of each interview, these key informants were asked to provide names of producers, community leaders, and other county residents who could inform the research process. These individuals were invited to participate in subsequent stages of the research.

The second stage of data collection was a series of four roundtable discussions organized in cooperation with other research teams working on the GEIS. The primary goal of the roundtables was identifying key issues in each location. Four of the counties were clustered together into two roundtables due to significant overlap in the commodity species being investigated. A roundtable discussion was held in each of the other two counties. Roundtable invitees included a cross section of livestock and poultry producers, community leaders, agricultural specialists, community activists, county and township officials, faith communities, and institutional representatives (e.g., Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, University of Minnesota Extension Service, etc.). Invitees were sent an

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5 Participants from a neighboring county were included in one of these as they were included in the examination conducted by other researchers.
introductory letter explaining the nature of the research and requesting their attendance at the roundtable, followed by a reminder telephone call. This yielded a total attendance of 60 persons in the four roundtables.

A standard set of questions was used to guide the discussion in all four roundtables, including a section that specifically addressed community controversy. A copy of the roundtable questions is included in the Appendix. The first question set of the Social and Community Impacts Research Team relates to the context of the examination. This set of questions measures the overall change in animal agriculture in the community and concomitant social and community changes. The second set of questions measures both the course of the controversy (the first research question) and the frames in controversy (the second research question). In addition, questions from the Land Use Research Team elicited substantial discussion related to community controversy and opposing frames of interpretation.

Continuing with the snowball method of sampling, roundtable participants were asked to provide names of potential contacts for individual interviews. Contacts were subsequently made with roundtable invitees who were unable to attend, those whose names were generated during these meetings and those whose names were generated in the key informant interviews but were not included in the roundtables. These individuals were contacted and asked to participate in personal interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 individuals, including livestock and poultry producers, neighbors of animal agriculture producers, community leaders and other residents in the study counties. These interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to 2 hours and took place in personal homes, barns and machine sheds, coffee shops or agency
offices. Again, a standard set of questions was used to guide each interview (included in the Appendix) including questions relevant to community controversy\(^6\). Within these questions, one set (3-10, 16, 17 and 19) related to the context of the examination. These are measures of overall change in animal agriculture and concomitant social and community changes. The second set of questions (3, 7, 8-10 and 11-14) measure frames in community controversy related to the second research objective. Questions 1 and 2 describe interview respondents in terms of their relationship to animal agriculture.

At the conclusion of each interview respondents were asked to provide additional names of people to contact. Interviews continued until research themes became repetitive in each location, at which time interviewing additional people would not have contributed to the study objectives.

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\(^6\) Questions included in the individual interviews cast a 'wide net', and not all data collected is included in this research. Much of this was specific to the GEIS using a question set developed by a University of Minnesota researcher. However, several questions do measure local controversy over animal agriculture and the involvement of the respondent in that controversy applicable to both objectives of this research.
CHAPTER V.

COURSE OF COMMUNITY CONTROVERSY

This chapter details the course of the community controversy in Frances Township. It begins with an overview of the context in which the controversy emerged, then describes the events of the controversy. It concludes with discussion of Coleman’s (1957) model with attention to elements in the setting and initiation of controversy and dynamic tendencies in community controversy found in the case of Frances Township.

Context of Frances Township

Frances Township is located on the western edge of Hillside County and due to geographic features is smaller than most townships in the county – only 6 miles by 4 miles in area. It is home to 372 households, both farm and non-farm, nearly half with children under age 18. Most households are owner-occupied, although about 30 dwellings are used seasonally (summer and hunting cabins) or as rentals in the township.

Hillside County and the region have undergone significant change in recent years due to proximity to the nine-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. The center of the metropolitan area is approximately 40 miles from Frances Township. Small rural communities have become exurban locales for new homes with expanded highway access to the central cities. Cluster residential development has emerged in formerly agricultural areas. Residential expansion in agriculture zoned areas has been and continues to be an issue for counties and townships in this region, and there is disagreement over the direction to take.
As one resident explained, “I think a lot of farmers are just resigned to the fact that people are moving in here, and there’s a certain resentment involved.”

Two townships away from Frances Township in the next county there have been many years of controversy surrounding one family’s expanding poultry and livestock operation. The Whitney family started with a large turkey operation, and expanded into hogs in the 1970s. By October 1999 Successful Farmer listed them as the 25th largest pork producer in the nation. Due to limitations on expanding their livestock sites in their home township, the Whitneys began contracting with smaller farmers in the area to finish hogs under production contracts in the 1980s. It is reported by one of their contractors that by 1994 they were contracting with 40 farmers across several counties in the region. When they submitted an application to expand their home feedlot site at that time to house 4,500 sows with more than 6,000 piglets at any one time, local neighbors and residents of a nearby community organized a unified response. A very visible community controversy ensued, culminating with withdrawal of the feedlot application during a state hearing.

Questions of land use also confront townships across Hillside County as individual townships have zoning ordinances reflecting varied perspectives on local land use. This means limited residential development in some townships and limited growth for agriculture in others. Frances Township has had a zoning ordinance for some time and a long-standing township planning commission. The zoning ordinance generally supported agricultural uses over residential development until 1995 and the controversy examined here. One person who was on the Frances Township board before 1995 described the situation as one where people did not want to appear anti-agriculture. He explained, “Agriculture - and this is a strange area here you know - too many people were scared to say no”.
Review of plat maps over time suggests current land use patterns in Frances Township have not substantially changed over the past 20 years (Figure 2). Along the northern edge of the township are a river and a reservoir in a wooded area where residents are primarily non-farmers. The eastern edge of the township runs along the city limits of River Falls, a city of 3,500 in the neighboring township. Many small building sites are located in these four sections of Frances Township, occupied by non-farming households with connections to the community of River Falls. The village of Frances is located at the western edge of the township, an area of about 320 acres. Frances is not an incorporated city and falls within the administration of the Frances Township Board. While there are fewer than 15 residential dwellings in Frances, it is home to the church many in the township attend and two nearby businesses that draw employees and customers from a multi-county area.

The remaining and largest area of Frances Township – about 16 sections - has historically been home to small family farms with a predominance of dairy operations. The topography of the township, rolling hills and prairies, has been conducive to this diversified approach to farming. It was suggested by a county employee that in these 16 sections

There hasn’t been a lot of change. Things have pretty much stayed the same. There’s been no pressure for development, no pressure for anything in this area. In this area (points to northern area of township) and in this area (area near edge of River Falls) this is a pressure area, and so is this. But right here, no.

Families living in the area are multiple-generation residents with farming roots. Fourth and fifth generation farms were often noted in this research, as were two instances of seventh generation farms. Frequently pointed out in interviews were the social connections among these long-time Frances Township families that have carried on from generation to
Figure 2. Frances Township

Steve & Debra Johnson Farm

City of River Falls

5 miles to Whitneys Farrowing Site

- Major Highways
- Township Border

Scale: 5/8" = 1 mile
generation. Individuals in Frances Township were school classmates, attended the same church, were involved in the same 4-H Club and FFA Chapter, socialized in one anothers’ homes, and were often related to one another. This was the case across all age groups. These multiple relationships were evident in the normal relations of everyday life prior to the community controversy examined here. People waved to one another when they met on the road, or stopped to have brief conversations with one another. Farmers shared equipment and labor, and when there was cropland to be rented, it was first offered to a neighbor.

There was a shared vision that Frances Township would continue being a community of small, multiple-generation diversified farm operations. The social fabric of the community was based in this vision, and until the community controversy examined here, the township board of supervisors wasn’t confronted with issues that divided the community. In many ways the normal relations in Frances Township prior to the controversy reflected traditional rural life found across Minnesota and in other areas of the upper Midwest over the past century.

One of the multiple generation families in Frances Township is the Johnsons. Steve Johnson’s grandfather, father, brother, and uncles have all been involved in crop farming and livestock production in Frances Township. According to Steve, his current building site has had hogs off and on since the 1930s – raised first by his grandfather and then his father. In 1976 Steve’s father built a 440-head hog barn on his building site, one of the first in the area to adopt the innovation of confinement hog production. Neighbors indicate Steve’s father and grandfather were always early adopters of technology, which several pointed to as a source of financial problems for the family. Steve’s father was also one of the first to enter production contracts, finishing hogs for the Whitneys in the next county since the early
1980s. One neighbor described Steve's father as "the kind of guy who likes innovations and experimenting and stuff. He's always been that way."

Steve grew up on the farm, but after graduation went to work in town and bought a house in Frances. He makes clear, however, it was always his desire to come back to work the farm. He was able to fulfill that goal in 1993 when he and his wife Debra purchased his father's building site where the 440-head hog barn was located and moved their young family to the farm. The same year Steve also entered a production contract with the Whitneys and built an additional 2,000 head hog barn on the site. Although this building was constructed without public opposition, there were concerns from nearby neighbors after construction began regarding odors and manure management. Anecdotal evidence from both the Johnsons and others interviewed suggests steps were taken to address at least some of these concerns. About the same time Steve's brother built a similar hog finishing operation on his farm approximately one mile from Steve and Debra's building site with similar neighbor reaction. Steve's brother had a relationship with the Whitneys as an employee in addition to being a contractee.

Steve and his brother were two of nine Hillside County farmers who held production contracts with the Whitneys in 1995, but they were the only two located in Frances Township. It was general knowledge that the Whitneys actively seeking farmers to contract with, including farmers in Frances Township. In other townships and counties the result had been local opposition to what was considered an industrial model of swine production inconsistent with traditional livestock practices in the region. This was explained often in the interviews, including this comment from one Frances Township resident.
The people in the next township in the next county were fighting Whitneys who intended to raise 365,000 baby pigs every year and they wanted to put them out onto farms. They had the brood sows and the boars, and they would raise the baby pigs. And they would control that part of it, and they would put these out. Well, it just so happened that out in our communities out here is where they wanted to put some of these.

The Period of Controversy

Understanding this context is important to understanding how the controversy evolved. Piecing together information from newspaper articles, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) files, court records and interviews with 22 local people involved provides a picture of the period of controversy that began in 1995.

In 1994 and 1995 Frances Township’s planning commission and township board, like many of their neighboring townships, were working on a new zoning ordinance that would address issues of feedlots and residential development. Steve Johnson realized it could be more difficult to obtain a permit to expand his hog operation once the new ordinance was in place. He also realized county and state ordinances would be developed that might further limit his options. As a Frances Township Board supervisor for more than 10 years, he understood the existing procedure for obtaining a permit. He completed the appropriate paperwork and obtained the permit from the township clerk for construction of a second 2,000 head hog barn (800 animal units), again with a 12 year production contract from the Whitneys. Since his site was already a designated feedlot, this was a permit for an expansion. After obtaining the township permit in the first week of March, 1995, Steve applied for the county permit and submitted his application to the MPCA. At some point during this process, according to community members on both sides of the controversy,
"word got out" about the planned expansion. While there are different versions of how this happened, there is general agreement about the response of Frances Township residents.

Two community members' comments exemplify what was heard in many of the interviews.

It was done in a fashion that was "don't let the general public know until it's too late." Well, through the grapevine they got caught, and that's when the controversy started.

And,

The thing that irritated people so much is there was no warning or no notice. No talking to neighbors and saying "I know this scares you, but we're going to run this in a way that's going to minimize the impact on your lives." It was just basically like in your face, like screw ya'.

Some of the most vocal opponents to the expansion expressed in interviews that the Johnson expansion would not have had the degree of opposition if they had taken a different approach.

If they would have gone about it in a different way they might have been able to do it without all the trouble. By informing people and trying to - people had fears about that - trying to assure people that "we're gonna do this in the best way we can, and we're not going to spread manure on Sundays, or we'll put down dust control on the roads for all the trucks" . . . they didn't do anything like that. Everything was "keep it quiet and try to sneak it in, if you don't like it, stuff it." I think people resented that a lot.

Neighbors began calling one another, and then meeting in small groups in local homes. The initial group opposed to the expansion was comprised of close neighbors of the Johnsons described as "at least half were farmers, active farmers. . . and then people like me who are rural residents out here with an acreage." One person involved described what took place in the township at that time.

I was either the first one or one of the first ones to start speaking up. I think some of the neighbors didn't feel like they could do that or had a right to do it or just hadn't done it. And there's some that never did, like [name of neighbors] down the road. . . . It came pretty fast that people started . . .
probably a couple of months. People were at meetings, and a lot of communication... there was a lot of smaller things... So there would be a lot of little phone calls, meetings, and stuff. I felt like I spoke out early on, but it didn’t take too long and it had a life of its own beyond me. People were a lot more active than I was, and eventually a lot more extreme than I was.

One person described how a close friend of the Johnson family spoke out early, and unexpectedly, against the expansion at a township meeting.

I couldn’t believe it, [friend of Steve’s father] is a soft-spoken guy, and he, at one of those first meetings, he spoke up. Steve was defending things, or Mr. Johnson was. He stood up and he was really pissed. I was really surprised.

In the Frances Township interviews, those opposed explained that at this point they weren’t sure what means were available to prevent the expansion.

I don’t think we knew even on what grounds we could work against it. I don’t think anyone knew what rules, what was on our side to deal with it. There was a tremendous amount of research, you know, people tapping every resource they could, you know, for other information.

They eventually contacted state and county agencies to find out what could be done to prevent the expansion. One staff member described these contacts in the following way.

But ultimately in the beginning it was just this one individual who was really making a lot of noise. And I think he probably got some of the other neighbors to go along with him and consequently that was the petition on this... They just kept calling about “how we could allow it?”

Those opposed to the expansion also networked with individuals in the neighboring county who had blocked expansion at the Whitney site. This connected the opposition group with a larger group of communities across the state and country opposing large-scale confinement agriculture. One possible action identified for the Frances Township group was requesting an Environmental Assessment Worksheet by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board. This would determine at the state level if the Johnson expansion would have an
environmental impact, and could possibly prevent the expansion. It was during this process that the Whitneys expansion application had been withdrawn.

After the Johnsons’ neighbors informed the MPCA they would be submitting a petition to request an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, supporters of the Johnson expansion felt the MPCA intentionally delayed approval of the permit. While most close neighbors had become involved in the opposition group, some supported the expansion. These extended family members and township farmers supported the Johnsons’ position. There was also a group of livestock producers who had similar operations or plans to expand their operations that came out in support of the Johnsons, although many of these individuals were from neighboring townships.

Two issues merged during this period of time – Steve and Debra Johnson’s plan to expand their feedlot and the new township zoning ordinance. The township planning commission and board of supervisors had been struggling to reach consensus on the new ordinance. Two of the three township board supervisors (including Steve Johnson) leaned toward less restriction in terms of feedlots, as did the township clerk. The other township supervisor, a resident of the northern lake area of the township who was becoming involved in efforts to oppose the Johnson expansion, was more inclined to consider multiple land uses. The township planning commission, in many ways reacting to what they saw in the neighboring county, wanted limitations on feedlots and proposed a more restrictive zoning ordinance in terms of animal agriculture.

It appears two things occurred at this point. The planning commission knew their more restrictive recommendations would not be adopted by the existing township board of supervisors, but the supervisors were prohibited by their by-laws from enacting a new
ordinance without the recommendations of the planning commission. Some residents of Frances Township had become aware of the Johnson's building permit and application to the MPCA and were organizing to oppose the expansion. Township board elections were slated for mid-March, and Steve Johnson's seat on the board was up for election. The same week Steve Johnson obtained the township permit, a life-long friend and neighboring farmer on the township planning commission filed his candidacy for the township board. When asked about this strategy in our interview, one individual active in the opposition to the Johnson expansion explained it as "find somebody to help us and grab control of the local township."

Steve lost the mid-March township board election on a 122-72 vote in one of the largest election turnouts in Frances Township history for board elections.

The election impact was swiftly felt. Within one month the Frances Township Board had approved a new and more restrictive feedlot ordinance by a 2-1 vote. Following the vote on the ordinance, the newly elected township supervisor was quoted as saying it was important the township "not leave the door open for someone to come in with 2,000 animal units tomorrow." The new ordinance required a conditional use permit for new feedlots with more than 300 animal units, and restricted existing feedlots to 500 animal units. Community members interviewed from both sides of the controversy indicate the ordinance was targeted at preventing the Johnson expansion and similar projects in the future.

I don't want to say "we're gonna make an example of Steve," but "we're not gonna have these corporate farms in Frances Township." It definitely got to be somewhat of an issue and I think that Steve was the flashpoint.
At the same meeting where the new zoning ordinance was adopted, a new policy statement was also adopted by the Frances Township Board voicing their desire to balance the interests of:

1) Owners of farmlands who believe their agricultural activities can best be optimized by the operation of animal and fowl feedlots; 2) farm owners and operators who do not operate feedlots; 3) Occupants of non-farm dwellings; 4) Owners of land with potential as non-farm dwellings sites, the value of which could be diminished by a lack of limits on feedlots.

But even some who opposed the Johnson expansion did not approve of what they viewed as an “extreme” zoning ordinance. As one explained,

When it came time to rewriting the township ordinance and stuff, after a lot of meetings and discussion and stuff, I kind of came to the conclusion that we needed to have an ordinance that included the Johnsons because they were in here already. In the township. But excluded things like [farmer from a neighboring community] you know, somebody who lives someplace else and wants to site these things on someplace that isn’t even a farmstead. And there were some, a lot of people, that were so angry and it couldn’t be too extreme for them.

Opposition to the Johnson expansion had developed rapidly, and with the change on the township board and the new township ordinance set to go into effect in June, Steve seemed to suspect there would be problems with his expansion. One of the requirements of the original township permit was that construction must proceed within 90 days of issue and the building must be finished within one year. Steve made the decision to begin construction within his permit by pouring seven feet of footings for the building the first week of June — just in time for the 90-day requirement.

There was little clarity in the township ordinance definition of ‘start construction’ and a history of township residents digging footings and pouring concrete so their permits didn’t expire. After pouring the footings, Steve called the township zoning administrator (the
township clerk) to let him know what he had done. Steve’s construction activity in his very visible farm yard drew even more attention, and resulted in community members speaking with both Steve and his father about the plans. These conversations were reported in interviews as quickly deteriorating, and people interviewed in this research pointed to these conversations as the last they had with members of the Johnson family.

In July 1995, the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board received a petition from 25 affected neighbors requesting an Environmental Assessment Worksheet on the Johnson expansion. They alleged, “Construction and operation of the facility would harm surface and ground waters, cause odors, and experience other problems because of land ownership issues.” While community members waited to hear whether the hearing would be granted, the township board, now with a different balance in terms of feedlot restriction, issued a letter to Steve and Debra advising them their township permit was revoked because construction had not started within 90 days.

The hearing for the Environment Assessment Worksheet was held in September, and community members were soon informed the Environmental Quality Board had denied the petition. This was a blow to those opposed the expansion, and seemed to increase their antagonism toward the Johnsons, state government, and the Whitneys. They felt their position had not been adequately heard by the Environmental Quality Board. As one person noted, “By this time the anger is so deep that we’re going to do whatever we can.” They continued with activities to prevent the Johnson expansion, including telephone calls and letters to public officials. One of the issues raised often in the interviews by those opposed to the expansion was what they identified as “lies” in the Johnson MPCA application materials.
We'd try to go through applications and stuff with a fine tooth comb, and there were things that were flat out lies on applications. We pointed it out to MPCA, who basically didn't care. Nothing we did accomplished anything other than delays.

And,

We complained about all this stuff, and no one did anything about it... After we worked and worked on all this and our voices weren't heard... We talked and told how they had over-applied by 600 gallons per acre. That's not putting on agronomic rates. Now they claimed, these boys claimed they put it on at agronomic rates but then the neighbor said they go over it two or three times at agronomic rates. So they could say honestly they put it on at agronomic rates, but when you go over and over the same field at agronomic rates... And on his MPCA application he lied. He said he had more acres — he included his Dad's acres when it wasn't owned by him. We know we were right. It was very aggravating.

Those opposed to the expansion did not feel state officials thoroughly investigated what they pointed to as lies, a position illustrated in a letter to the Assistant Attorney General.

And per the MPCA Board of September 26th's afternoon session, "We rely on the honestly (sic) of citizens when they apply for a permit", appalls us! Even when we make the effort to report facts to the MPCA Staff, they just overlook them. Is the purpose of the MPCA to help applicants get permits and see how much they can allow them to get away with? Who is helping or protecting who??? Believe me, when someone is not honest from day one, they won't be honest on day two either.

In October a round of letters was sent to several state officials, including a letter to the Governor of Minnesota that read in part as follows.

At a recent hearing (Sept. 26th) they lost part of the meeting, no tape is available. I was representing 31 citizens in Frances Township on a request for an EAW. The Citizens Committee just rolled right over the request. Lies were in the application, but [committee member] just pooh, poohed it like a naughty child. In the Applicant's Agreement, the last phrase is "(Any knowingly false or misleading statement will be subject to penalties provided by law.)" Signed by Steve Johnson 4-2-95. Where is our justice system? He claimed on his application he owned 320 acres, when infact he only owned 5.43 acres.
The MPCA gave him an interim permit for 2000 AU (animal units) owning only about now 10 acres (since his parents gave him 5 a more in late September). He doesn’t till any soil (since he owns none) and per his Contract for Deed (lease agreement) he can’t own any hogs. Is this a “FARMER”? Does this make any sense?

Who has told MPCA to steam-roll these huge feedlots thru? Who has told you not to touch agriculture? Who has left the Citizens of Minnesota unprotected from pollution? Who will be our defender? Many of us have shallow wells on the Karst (fractured bedrock) of Southeastern Minnesota, who will provide pure water for us and our families? Will the state stop this when our children are effected? When high nitrates in our drinking water cause kidney failure? Who will provide “fresh” air for our families when the MPCA Board and [staff member] insist on letting huge factory farms to develop? Why have you failed us?

The letters sent and phone calls made after the EAW was denied did elicit discussions within and between state agencies. An inter-office email in November 1995 in part read,

A Mr. [name of community member] called and had some real bad things to say about our issuing a permit for the above feedlot. He wants to come in and talk to us about the EAW process and how we could issue a permit for this site. A big issue is the odors and then property values come up. This case has been to the board already and [name of caller] did not like the results so he is going to try and contact someone from the legislature also. We have also just got a due date letter from the gov on this site. The locals are going all out to see what they can do to stop the construction.

When asked about the tenacity of the community members opposed to the expansion, one community member who supported the Johnson expansion explained “People get things in their minds, it’s hard to change them.”

Although the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board determined in September 1995 that an Environmental Assessment Worksheet was not needed and approval for the expansion was received from MPCA, Steve could not continue with construction because he no longer had the township permit. At this point Steve filed a civil lawsuit requesting the county judge issue a temporary restraining order on the township’s revocation of the permit. Steve’s
In October 1995 the county judge ordered a freeze on both construction of the Johnson building and enforcement of the township ordinance so he could review the situation. He then issued an order in November stating the Johnson's township permit was valid, and construction could proceed. He also issued a temporary injunction barring the township from enforcing the new feedlot ordinance on the Johnson expansion and set a hearing for January 1996 to determine if there would be a permanent injunction on the township. Johnsons began pouring concrete the day the judge issued the order. They needed to pour concrete before it got too cold, and the terms of the original township permit required construction be completed by the first week of March 1996 (12 months after the original permit was issued). This upset community members who felt Steve and Debra should have waited to proceed with construction until after the January hearing. This action was frequently noted in interviews with those opposed to the expansion who felt the final court decision had not been made, yet every time they drove by the Johnson farm they could see construction progressing. One community member who publicly supported the Johnsons concurred that this agitated those who were opposed. His perspective was that

He had his mind made up he was gonna do this . . . whether it was right or wrong to keep going. Maybe the court made a mistake by not saying “stop your building right here until we iron this out.” Maybe it would have been a different outcome. Who knows.

In January 1996 the township filed new legal documents against the Johnson expansion. These documents reflected a change in the township’s position as they now accepted the original feedlot permit as valid, but indicated the zoning ordinance approved in
April 1995 was retroactive requiring the Johnson expansion to comply with the stricter ordinance. The response from the Johnsons was that the new ordinance was arbitrary and capricious, and had the sole intent of blocking their specific expansion. This led to three days of county court testimony in February. The judge had 90 days to make his determination, but in the interim he blocked use of the now fully-constructed and empty hog building on the Johnson farm.

Those opposed to the expansion remained active in township government. In March there were two seats up for election on the Frances Township Board — the positions of the lone supervisor to vote against the new feedlot ordinance and the township clerk who had issued the Johnsons’ permit. Neither had filed for re-election. One explained,

I probably would have continued had it not been as contentious as it was. I could plainly see that I was not going to get anywhere regardless of what side of a particular issue I was on, I was never gonna get anywhere. . . . I just don’t need all that kind of problem.

The men elected to these board seats in March 1996 had been very active in opposition to the Johnson expansion. By this time the township board had also hired an outside consultant to work with them on issues of the zoning ordinance.

In the spring of 1996 there was an unsuccessful attempt by the county to mediate a decision in this controversy. Both sides met with their attorneys and the judge to lay out a set of ground rules within which everyone could comply. Some of these were no pumping of manure through hoses; no pumping of manure pits on weekends or holidays; and requests for scrubbers on the ventilation system. However, the sticking point was the township board’s requirement that these stipulations apply to Steve’s brother and father as well. This was not acceptable to Steve and Debra who felt this unfairly affected their extended family. Without
a mediated agreement the county judge ruled in favor of the Johnson expansion in April. His order prevented the township from enforcing the new feedlot ordinance or requiring a conditional use permit for the 2,000 hog expansion. He also lifted the order preventing use of the new building.

In May 1996, the township board requested a new county trial on the issue. One local resident illustrated the situation in the township at that time in the following manner.

I think by that time emotions get so strong that, I don’t know, ‘we’re gonna show him.’ I don’t think that anybody believed that they were gonna empty that building again, you know. And there again, Steve just kinda kept on going, right or wrong, I’m not gonna pass that judgement, but he did just keep on going, and you know, ‘They are not gonna stop me.’

Frances Township’s request for a new county trial was denied in June. The township then appealed the county court ruling to the Minnesota Court of Appeals, which was denied in February 1997. The township board then made their final appeal – to the Minnesota Supreme Court. In February 1997 the Minnesota Supreme Court declined to hear the case, just 20 days short of two years since the original permit was issued by the Frances Township Clerk.

In late 1996 Hillside County began meeting with the Frances Township planning commission and the consultant they had hired to review the zoning ordinance passed in April 1995. This initiated a new round of public hearings and recommendations from the township planning commission to the township board. As one community member explained,

After all this went down, and we saw how the judicial system picked what we had apart, we made the decision that it was time to have the ordinance re-done. And it took almost $20,000 and took over two years where there was a lot of participation by people, and at first the corporate individuals came in, but they realized early that no one could favor what you’re doing, so they didn’t bother to really show. It was interesting, people wanted to come up with a plan for the quality of life for their community, this is grass-roots
situation, a chance that you can actually do something for yourself and not have to worry about Big Brother doing it for you.

Over a two-year period there was a high degree of community input into revising the local ordinance. Some point to this as the only positive thing to come out of the controversy. Many who were interviewed felt the resulting ordinance is not significantly more restrictive on feedlots or supportive of multiple land uses than the pre-1995 ordinance. One person noted “I don’t think the ordinances are hardly worth the paper they’re written on.”

Composition of the Frances Township Board has changed again. There are two new supervisors, a new clerk and a new treasurer. The one board member not replaced during the community controversy continues to serve on the board. Although neighbors continue to express concerns about odors, environmental impacts, and quality of life issues, this research did not identify any households who have moved from the area for those reasons since 1995. There were older farmers identified who stated they have decided not to build retirement homes in the area due to the Johnson family hog facilities. And one person explained “I had intended this would be my home forever, and that’s the way I’ve invested in it.” He is no longer certain if he will remain in the area.

Others feel the township is increasingly supportive of residential development and unsupportive of expansion in agriculture. One person who was supportive of the Johnson expansion explained,

I think it’s gonna be very hard to expand livestock in Frances Township. I’ve not been involved in the ordinances they’re working on now, but I think it will be very hard.

And another, referring to two new homes being built in the area, said “there’s more people to be against hog farms. . . the more the better.”
The Johnson hog building was the last of its type built in Frances Township. Six years after the controversy began they continue raising hogs in their buildings through production contracts with the Whitneys. There are presently 4,400 hogs on the site at any time. Steve has quit his town job, but Debra still works off the farm. Relationships with nearby neighbors outside their own family are limited. Most people opposed to the expansion who were interviewed in this research still do not speak with the Johnson family or their supporters. The following is typical of comments made in interviews.

There’s people that don’t talk to one another yet. I suspect that some of these people will never talk to one another again.

Everyone interviewed was asked about the long-term impact of this controversy on Frances Township. Some suggested there are elderly residents of Frances Township who will pass away without ever speaking with one another again. Others felt it would be up to the children to rebuild relationships. Nearly all indicated there were permanent community divisions that will take a long time to be resolved.

There’s definitely two different sides, corporations and then the actual family farmers. (pause) There’s a wall between the two of them. (pause) A lot of hatred.

And,

I have not seen any progress from either side. I think people’s convictions are just as strong as they ever were.

Precursors to Community Controversy

Not all incidents or crises in a community result in controversy. Coleman (1957) suggests when confronted with an incident a community will either be defeated, united, or a controversy will ensue. The type of event and the context of the community in which it
occurs are important in determining if it results in unification, defeat or controversy. Those events he indicates will lead to controversy 1) affect an important sphere of community members’ lives; 2) differentially impact community members; and 3) community members feel they can take action to influence.

In Frances Township proposed expansion of the Johnson hog operation clearly impacted important spheres of community members’ lives, however, it did not impact the same sphere for both sides of the controversy. For the Johnson family, their relatives, and the farmers who supported them, construction of hog barns impacted their economic sphere. They viewed this as a means to increase income from their farming livelihood, and for some, even a way to stay in farming. In a 1994 newspaper editorial, Steve’s father had attributed his family’s ability to remain in farming to their production contracts. Farmers who supported the Johnson expansion felt they were in the same position with their own buildings or planned buildings. Opposition to the Johnson expansion was considered a threat to their common livelihood.

Community members opposed to the expansion saw potential impact on their private sphere – their home and family. Construction of this building was viewed as threatening their personal health and safety through environmental damage and well-water contamination. Odor issues with the previous building had impacted quality of life for the closest neighbors, an impact perceived as intensifying and spreading to more neighbors with construction of the additional barn. They also voiced concerns about the impact the expansion would have on the traditional way of life in Frances Township.

The impact of the proposed hog barn differentially impacted community members. The Johnson family was in place to benefit financially from construction of the hog finishing
building, but they would also have the most risk of odors, dust, and environmental impact. Their closest neighbors would have similar risk in terms of odors, dust and environmental impact, but would have no financial benefit. Community members from farther away had the least risk in terms of odor and environmental impacts. Close friends of the Johnson family who found themselves in disagreement with the construction of an additional hog building on this site had a high degree of social impact. This was also the case with Steve and Debra and their extended family. Those with the least social impact were township residents without strong social ties to the community or the Johnson family.

Moreover, Francis Township residents felt they had the ability to take action in response to the Johnson expansion. Those opposed to the expansion saw and seized upon several ways to respond: township elections, a new zoning ordinance; requesting an Environmental Assessment Worksheet; and pursuing legal appeals. They had also been observers of the controversy in the neighboring township where those opposed had successfully stopped the Whitney expansion. Those who supported the expansion developed stronger ties with farmers who were contracting with the Whitneys, appearing together at public meetings and hearings to voice their support for the expansion. They also felt they had a legal right to raise livestock as they wished and used government and legal processes to assert this right.

Coleman’s model suggests it is the event and the context that will determine if an incident leads to defeat, unification, or controversy in a community. In Frances Township the evidence discussed here clearly points to a context for controversy in response to the Johnson feedlot expansion that was different from events in the past. This event marked a division in the shared view of the future held by community members.
Dynamics of Controversy in Frances Township

As all community controversies emerge, they contain what Coleman identifies as dynamic tendencies in issues and social organization. Issues in community controversies go through three transformations: specific issues transform to general issues, new issues arise, and disagreement evolves to antagonism. Community controversies also change the social organization of the community: social relations are polarized, partisan organizations are formed, new leaders emerge, community organizations are drawn into the controversy, and communication becomes increasingly reliant on word of mouth.

Specific Issues to General Issues

Coleman suggests specific issues are most likely to transform to general issues in communities where there are cleavages in community values or interests. This was the case in Frances Township. Prior to the controversy a cleavage had emerged between those in the township with an agriculture-only focus and those who favored multiple land uses. The disparity between the goals of the planning commission and the township board of supervisors exemplifies this cleavage. Within this context the Johnson permit for a feedlot expansion quickly transformed to issues of township land use and industrial vs. traditional farming practices. Examples of both the cleavage and the transformation of specific issues to general issues are found in letters published in the newspaper at the time the controversy emerged.

To the editor.
This letter expresses my opinion and asks the residents of Frances Township for their support in the forthcoming election of a township supervisor.
I firmly believe that it is unacceptable to site 6,000 pigs within 1,100 feet of an existing residence as was approved by the current board. I will work to resolve land use disputes in an open-minded manner as I understand farming issues as well as non-farming issues.

I have been a member of the Frances Township Planning Commission since 1988. Recently that commission has been drafting a proposal that would more properly address feedlots. Although not complete, that proposal is a good foundation which will allow farming and non-farming land uses to coincide within our community. I do not wish to restrict farming, which has been and should continue to be the backbone of our community, but recent proposals from non-resident farmers have encroached on existing landowner’s rights. I do not believe that any farm or non-farm resident should have to contend with the siting of a factory farm near their home.

I will treat all resident’s concerns with similar respect.

Sincerely,
[name of candidate]

And this letter from a community member who supported the expansion and Steve’s election to the township board.

To the editor.
Frances Township residents will have an opportunity to make a choice at the polls next Tuesday, as two individuals have indicated an interest in the one expiring supervisor position. Currently, the township is considering a very restrictive feedlot ordinance which will eventually affect every livestock producer in Frances Township. This ordinance is being considered to address residential concerns. There are many farms in Frances Township that are ideally suited for animal agriculture, and the farmer’s right to farm should not be unfairly burdened with regulation, especially at the township level. I believe this type of regulation will mostly affect youth considering agriculture production as a career, as it adds yet another uncertainty in the future of farming.

Unfortunately, the farmer is becoming an ever decreasing minority in today’s society. As farmer number decrease, so does their ability to have equality in political influence.

Steve Johnson is a hard working, honest, devoted family farmer with a good understanding of modern agriculture. His wealth of experience on the town board together with knowledge of agriculture issues make an outstanding combination of what our township needs as they consider these current issues.
A vote for Steve on Tuesday at the township election will show your support for the farmers in the area. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted
[name of individual]
Frances area farmer

**New Issues Arise**

Two types of new issues, according to Coleman, will arise in a community controversy – involuntary and voluntary. Involuntary issues emerge as relationships between individuals and opposing groups deteriorate, and often initially arise in a ‘by the way’ manner. In this case, the involuntary issues centered on the farming practices and land ownership of the Johnson family. Those interviewed who were opposed to the expansion would often bring up incidents and episodes in the past where Steve, his father, and even his grandfather were not viewed as ‘successful’ in the eyes of their neighbors. The culmination of this, in the eyes of the community, was the combined decisions of Steve’s father to rent out the cropland around the building site and focus family efforts on production contracts to finish hogs. This is how it was explained in one interview.

We’ve watched the Johnsons through the years, you know, and they’ve been trying. They just don’t got the farming in their blood. They were late-comers to the community, and his father tried just about everything there was to farm and couldn’t make a living off of it. So it ended up somebody else buying it and then we’ll just work for you.

While the involuntary issue of the Johnson family’s lack of success in crop farming had been quietly discussed for years, it emerged as a new issue in this controversy within a few months when it began making its way into letters printed in the newspaper.

The so called ‘FARMER’ who tills no soil, produces no crops, and can own no hogs/LIVESTOCK is issued a permit . . .
Voluntary issues arise in a purposive manner in community controversy to solidify identity. The most predominant voluntary issue raised by those opposed to the expansion was the relationship of the Johnson expansion to the Whitneys’ large-scale production. This connected the 2,000 hog Johnson barn with what community members opposed to the expansion characterized as “industrialized agriculture” and “factory farming.” This came out often in letters to the newspaper and in the personal interviews.

It was always, always tried to be focused that this was the ‘Johnsons’ when we all knew it was the Whitneys, and it still is. They’re nothing more than people who live in the middle of the stink and haul the manure out to the field at the end of the year. Reality, when you read the contract, you know, for twelve years that you’re gonna raise hogs in our building, our hogs, we’re gonna tell you what’s gonna go on, and at the end of that twelve years you can have the facility. Well the life expectancy of the building is between 12 and 15 years. And,

They kept Whitneys out of it. They said it was a family farm. Well how can they have a family farm when they only own 5 acres and these hogs aren’t even going to belong to them? This is a factory operation. This is a commercial business.

It also connected those opposed to the expansion with the larger group opposed to expansion at the Whitney breeding site in the neighboring county. Letters began appearing in the local paper written by people from the next county and letters from Frances Township residents began including references to those issues as well.

**Disagreement Evolves to Antagonism**

While a dispute may begin centered on issues, Coleman suggests that when it evolves to hostility and personal attacks it can stray from the original incident. Issues became personalized quickly in Frances Township. Personal attacks went both ways. Letters sent to
the MPCA and state officials in the summer and fall of 1996 reflect more focus on personal
deficiencies of the Johnson family than the specific expansion project being reviewed.

Both sides of the controversy report receiving harassing telephone calls and middle of
the night hang-up calls throughout the course of the controversy. An incident often reported
in the interviews was an occasion when three opponents of the Johnson expansion were
talking along the edge of the road. An expansion proponent drove by, then turned around
further down the road and came back at a very high speed driving extremely close to where
they were standing and throwing gravel and dust in their faces. This incident was commonly
referred to as the time “They tried to run [names of men leaning on the truck] off the road.”

Even the demeanor of Steve’s mother during the court appearance was criticized in one of
the interviews.

They didn’t care what the rest of us thought. I knew their mother very well, I
had been in Birthday Club and in Church with her for many, many years. And
you know, she sat very pious and like this was the right thing for her family in
the courthouse.

Both proponents and opponents of the expansion report people from the opposing
side making obscene hand gestures toward them as they met along the road, and verbal
assaults reportedly directed toward Debra and the Johnson children were particularly
extreme. Clearly in Frances Township the focus moved from the issue of the expansion to
antagonistic actions. One person described it as “the issue had nothing to do with it.”

Another stated, “It got to be a power struggle after awhile . . . between the ones that wanted it
and the ones that didn’t.”
Polarization of Social Relations

Coleman posits that as community controversy grows, interactions within groups flourish. At the same time, interactions between individuals in opposing groups wither and community members on opposing sides stop speaking with one another. There is no doubt this was the case in Frances Township.

Steve and Debra had many life-long friends in the community. Many they had gone to school with and went to the same church. Within a matter of weeks those social connections in the community had disappeared. Their social circle increasingly became immediate family members and other area farmers with plans to expand their own livestock operations. Farmers in neighboring townships with links to the Whitneys also became part of this group of expansion proponents and the Johnson’s social circle.

While the polarization of social relations was difficult for Steve and Debra, it appeared even more difficult for Steve’s father and his brothers. They found themselves ostracized from social circles they had been part of for 50 or 60 years. Even Steve and Debra’s children were affected. In the spring of 1995 Debra and their daughter attended a school awards ceremony. It was obvious, one person explained, that no one but him was going to speak with them, and they left before refreshments were served. He went on to say, “I know how tough it’s been on those kids to be accepted by other kids.”

One community member who was very active in the opposition to the Johnson expansion had been a friend of Steve’s dad. His story exemplifies the polarization in Frances Township.

Until this hog controversy got started, Mr. Johnson, Steve Johnson’s dad, he and I were good friends. You know, he and I had an ongoing relationship. I run on these roads, and every time he’d stop. We had this ongoing debate
Those opposed to the expansion developed a close group through the controversy. One of those involved described this group as a "a mixed bag" of different types of farmers and non-farmers in the township. As time went on this group increasingly included people from the neighboring county who had opposed expansions at the Whitney site and other contractees. Those interviewed describe this period as one of high interaction with other community members opposed to the expansion. A non-farmer who had lived in Frances Township for more than 25 years said that before this he had only been in a couple of his neighbors' homes, but throughout the controversy they had many gatherings in homes, increasing his social interaction within this group of the community.

One couple who was interviewed explained how they initially were involved in the group opposed to the Johnson expansion, but later withdrew their involvement. They described the groups in the controversy as becoming so polarized they wouldn't consider compromise.

On the one side we had those who were totally against factory farms, who wouldn't even comprehend a compromise. And then we had the people that were for it and said "Well, we can't go against it because it's going against agriculture.

Formation of Partisan Organizations

As controversy intensifies, Coleman suggests ad hoc organizations form on each side. These groups become central in terms of communication, planning and organizing. Proponents of the feedlot expansion in Frances Township were already, in a sense, an organization through their ties to the Whitneys. As the controversy intensified the ties
between these farmers grew stronger. Opposition to the Johnson expansion was increasingly viewed as a challenge to their collective ‘right to farm.’ Throughout the controversy the Whitneys remained in the background, and it was this group of ‘family farmers’ who testified in court and at local and state hearings.

Community members opposed to the expansion formed a strong local organization with external ties to similar groups in the region and the state. Six years later one individual stated he still receives frequent email on this issue from people all over the country. This group held frequent planning and strategy meetings in people’s homes and wrote co-signed letters to local papers. As the controversy progressed there appeared to be a blurring of boundaries between the ad hoc group opposed to the Johnson expansion and the Frances Township Board. By March 1996 all five people on the township board, three supervisors, the clerk and the treasurer, were active members of the ad hoc group opposed to the expansion. One person interviewed who was very involved with this group suggests in retrospect that it was hard to tell who was making the decisions, the Township Board or the group of community members. This was particularly the case in decisions to appeal the court decisions and continue paying attorney fees.

Emergence of New Leaders

Leaders emerge in controversies that have not previously been in that role. Coleman points out these are often people without long-term connection to the community, and will take an extremist leadership role in the controversy. This was most evident in the group opposed to the expansion in Frances Township. In a context of multiple-generation farm families, the leaders that emerged in the opposition group were new to the area (in relative
and neither were farmers. They developed connections to people in the neighboring county and wrote the letters that appeared in the newspaper and were sent to state agencies. In retrospect, one of these individuals felt pushed into this position by long-term community residents who she now feels took advantage of her. While several community members involved were eventually elected to township offices or served on county committees, these two individuals have not moved into any local elected positions. And other active members indicated in interviews that the leaders took a more extreme position than they were willing to take. This led one very active couple to withdraw from the group as the controversy progressed.

Community Organizations are Drawn into the Controversy

While local organizations often struggle to maintain neutrality, they are increasingly drawn into a community controversy. As members of community organizations are increasingly polarized into opposing groups, organizations cannot help but feel the controversy. In some cases community organizations formally take a ‘side’ in the controversy. In other cases they do not, yet the polarization of their membership impacts the organization. One of the community organizations most affected by the controversy in Frances Township was the local church which the most involved community members, including the Johnson family, attended.

I can remember being at the town board meeting when this first came up, and [a neighbor], he’s an older guy, he just like couldn’t believe it that these people were doing this to him. I can remember him saying “What? They go to our church.” Like, I can’t believe they would do this because they go to our church.
As time went on and the Johnson family was increasingly ostracized, normal church activities became more difficult. People both within and from outside the church were aware of how it had become divided. As an example, it was explained that the Johnson family would sit together, and the pews around them would remain empty as no other members of the congregation would sit near them. In the end, Steve and Debra’s family and Steve’s parents left the church for another congregation in a neighboring community.

**Increased Word of Mouth Communication**

Much of the communication in the Frances Township community controversy was word of mouth. The local newspaper is published only weekly, and while they did cover events taking place in the township, the information was often delayed a week or more. Those opposed to the expansion criticized this local newspaper in a letter to the editor for what they perceived to be declining interest in covering the Frances Township controversy.

This letter is a response to the inaccuracies published by the [local paper] in the article about the feedlot controversy in Frances Township. That article was written by [name of reporter]. [Name of reporter] did not state where she obtained the information for that article. It was not first hand, since we have not seen her at recent township meetings, or the court hearing on October 11, 1995.

Coleman suggests that as community controversy progresses the formal media sources cannot keep up with events, which was clearly the case in Frances Township where the local newspaper is published weekly. It also seemed the interest of the reporter in attending township meetings and court hearings waned as the controversy went on. The informal communication network that served as the primary information source for both sides in Frances Township took the form of telephone calls between community members.
and stopping to talk along the road. While communication in this controversy was primarily word of mouth, there was no indication in the interviews that this led to inaccuracies or misinformation.

Frances Township and the Dynamics of Controversy

This chapter has described the course of the community controversy in Frances Township, looking for the degree of support for concepts of Coleman's (1957) model of community controversy. Examination of these elements supports the model posited by Coleman. There is substantial evidence described here of the dynamic tendencies in issues and social organization in this controversy. The specific issue of the feedlot expansion transformed to general issues of zoning, agriculture versus multiple use, and the industrialization of animal agriculture. New issues regarding the Johnson family's success in farming and their connection to the Whitneys arose. And disagreement evolved to antagonism in the community as personal attacks replaced dialogue between neighbors.

The controversy also changed the social organization of the community as social relations between those opposed to the expansion and those who supported it were polarized. A new ad hoc organization was formed to oppose the expansion, while ties between the Whitneys, the Johnson family and their supporters increased. New leaders emerged in the group opposed to the expansion that had not been considered community leaders before the controversy. The local church was drawn into the controversy as its membership was divided, with the Johnson family eventually leaving the congregation. And communication throughout the controversy took place informally rather than through the local newspaper.
While the elements of Coleman’s model are identified in the controversy in Frances Township, two areas are identified in this controversy that Coleman does not significantly address. First, the role of bystanders or community members not involved in community controversy. And the involvement of individuals from outside the community as the controversy proceeded.

Coleman’s model suggests all community members will eventually take a side as the controversy proceeds, and does not identify an unaffected group in the community. Yet, in Frances Township there were community members who did not feel directly affected. They were described as individuals who felt either “It doesn’t affect me,” or there was nothing that could be done, and had no identifiable impact on the course of the controversy. This research also identified several people who privately supported the expansion but publicly did not take a position. In some cases this was due to family ties or connections, but also to people’s professional lives. Some of these individuals had privately contacted the Johnson family to let them know they supported the expansion, but not all of them. People also stated they privately supported the opposition, but could not publicly speak out for similar reasons.

The research also points to the involvement of individuals from neighboring communities in the controversy. The Johnsons were supported by producers from neighboring communities, while those opposed to the Johnson expansion became increasingly connected to opponents of other Whitney expansions as the controversy progressed. While Coleman discussed the involvement of external community factors as precursors to controversy, he doesn’t note a role for individuals from outside the community throughout the course of the controversy.
CHAPTER VI.
FRAMES IN COMMUNITY CONTROVERSY

In this chapter the frames in dispute in Frances Township are explored, and using Homans’ case study approach, the larger group of counties is examined for those same elements. Dimensions and elements of the conventional-alternative agriculture paradigm are then compared with elements of the frames in the community controversies.

Frames in Frances Township

Snow and Benford define a frame as “an interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses ‘the world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one’s present or past environments (1992:137).” Framing is the process of using a particular perspective to interpret events with the goal of mobilizing others to support a specific position. It gives legitimacy to the position, and without an effective frame for action, there cannot be mobilization of individuals (Gamson et al., 1982).

Frames in Frances Township were defined by identification of problems and cause, identification of tactics and strategies, and identification of the reasons for action, the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivation functions of collective action frames (Snow and Benford, 1988). In the research in Frances Township two clear frames emerged in this controversy, referred to here as the agribusiness frame and the quality of life frame. The label “agribusiness” comes from Friedland (2000), who suggests intensive animal production
is more closely related to an industrial approach and is better defined as *agribusiness* than *agriculture*. The term *quality of life* refers to this group’s collective definition of issues in this controversy, what they commingled in the often-used term “quality of life.”

**The Agribusiness Frame in the Frances Township Controversy**

In Frances Township the agribusiness frame was held by Steve and Debra Johnson, their extended family, county officials, and a group of farmers who supported the project but primarily lived beyond the immediate neighborhood (some even in neighboring townships). This was a core group of about 25-30. Most were farmers who had constructed similar animal barns on their farms (swine and dairy) or had plans to do so. Many from outside the township had ties to the Whitneys.

**Problem and Cause (Diagnostic Function)**

The agribusiness frame viewed the source of the Frances Township controversy as unwillingness on the part of the Johnson’s neighbors to understand that practices of raising livestock have changed. Advanced use of technology in livestock production was identified in all interviews as a natural progression that is anticipated to continue. There was a view that technology provides a better way, and change in livestock production follows the industrialization of other “industries.” As one individual from the agribusiness frame stated, “Small farms need more livestock to support their families.” And in one letter printed in the local newspaper an individual stated,
If you are ready to retire, you need to think who am I going to sell my farm to? We hope it would be another farmer, but would the other farmer be interested if he knew he couldn’t progress along with the rest of the industry?

Those within the agribusiness frame viewed those within the quality of life frame as living in the past, anti-technology, anti-agriculture, and not able to understand why animal production practices need to change. They often suggested in interviews that those with a quality of life frame “need to be educated” and viewed them as acting on emotion rather than on fact. One even stated

We have some old-fashioned farmers around here, but I don’t know, I didn’t think any of them were stupid though.

Tactics and Strategies (Prognostic Function)

The tactics and strategies of the agribusiness frame were based on legal rights. Within this frame it was felt farmers had the right to raise animals on their own land using whatever practices they chose within the bounds of reasonable regulation. Neighbors should not have the ability to stop this on a case-by-case basis. One letter to the local paper stated “The farmer’s right to farm should not be unfairly burdened with regulation, especially at the township level.” The Johnson family and their supporters felt the legal system supported this legal right when they prevailed at the Environmental Quality Board and at all levels of the court system.

The agribusiness frame viewed the tactics of the quality of life frame as personal attacks, using church, school and social events as venues to alienate the Johnson Family. They also viewed the changes in the Frances Township zoning ordinance as personally targeting the Johnson expansion.
Reason for Action (Motivation Function)

The underlying motivation for the agribusiness frame in Frances was couched in terms of preserving the family farm - although those within the quality of life frame disagreed on this definition of family farm. It was often stated that by constructing the barn and increasing the Johnson farm income, Steve Johnson could give up his off-farm job and his son would be able to join the farm operation in the future.

Jealousy of the success or potential success of farmers who built new buildings was often cited by individuals within the agribusiness frame as the motivator for farmers within the quality of life frame. This was pointed to as an ‘emotional’ response to a ‘fact-based’ business decision. One person from the agribusiness frame who was interviewed stated

Probably half the people it was an environmental concern, not a big concern but they were concerned, you know, cause at that time you were hearing about all these hog spills . . . but the other half of the people it was more of a jealousy thing . . . and I don’t know why because some of them that were jealous have a lot fatter bank accounts than we do . . . It was the jealousy, and they had the government that they could run with it.

The Quality of Life Frame in Frances Township

Those within the quality of life frame in Frances Township were primarily long-term residents of the community. The majority were the Johnsons’ closest neighbors, most still involved in farming. Others were non-farming members of the community, but still long-term residents. Some of these long-term, non-farming members were described by others in this group as activists,

. . . you know, the type of people who have MPR on the radio 24 hours a day, and they are civic minded, but the do go overboard, but at least they have the community in mind and they are knowledgeable to know what angles we should approach this at.
Most in the quality of life frame had farming ties to the community. If they were not actively farming their parents and grandparents farmed or had previously farmed. Only a few had no farming ties to the community. In one letter to the local newspaper they defined themselves as “non-feedlot farmers and rural residents.” They shared a lack of trust in county and state government and the court system. As one local farmer within this frame explained, “The way the legislature works the last few years, you know, they’re leading the big business, big farmer through the door by the hand”

Those within the quality of life frame describe those in the agribusiness frame who supported the Johnson’s expansion as “... just family members who were not actually realizing what was going on other than this was a family thing.” They particularly noted the Whitneys stayed in the background throughout the controversy. They often indicated they felt sorry for the Johnsons, that they were “victims” of the Whitneys as well.

I guess maybe it’s not fair to say “Steve.” Well, my understanding is Whitneys put up the money, actually, when you’re contract feeding like that you are working for Whitneys, Land O’ Lakes, or whoever it is, and I believe that in most cases, you maybe know more about than I do, that entity puts up the money and they say “you are gonna do this and you are gonna do that and you follow these rules so at the end you put out the product we want.” So it’s not really fair to say it’s all Steve I think, because I’m sure that the Whitneys was backing him in this venture. The name came up in papers once in a while, obviously people had access to contracts, public information you know, so those contracts came to light and that really, that was the extent of the visibility of Whitneys. Maybe that was strategy on their part, on Steve’s part, to keep Whitneys out of it so this big corporation, if you want to call it that, it was not visible. You didn’t have the feeling you were fighting this corporation, you were fighting Steve Johnson.

And speaking of Steve’s father,

He’s really basically a nice guy, and I think he just got seduced by the likes of Whitneys and a promise that probably didn’t materialize.
Problem and Cause (Diagnostic Function)

The quality of life frame considered the problem in Frances Township as the threat to the local environment, contamination of well water, odors, deterioration of local infrastructure and the general decrease in quality of life that would be caused by the construction of the Johnson’s hog barn. The following comments exemplify how the problem was framed.

It’s a question of how do you want to live – a quality of life issue – and do you steal that quality of life from your neighbor, or do you try and get along with ‘em and generate a business that fits into the community?

And,

You know that something’s going on when they’ve got to have fans going continually to aerate these pits to remove those gasses so the hogs don’t die. And they have back-up systems, and when those fail, and I’ve seen ‘em and I’ve read about them, those hogs are dead within an hour. There’s no way of living in there. This is not good.

But the source of the controversy was clearly viewed as the Whitneys. One person interviewed suggested “they’re the real owners, this is just a facade down there.” One letter to the local paper defined the problem as “the unwarranted placement of factory farms.” In letters to the newspaper, quotes to local reporters, and interviews with those involved, the Whitneys were characterized as forcing “corporate farming” and “industrialized factory type farming” into the community by “convincing small farmers to raise their animals for them.” It was often heard that they just “snuck it through the back door.” As one individual stated, “we are victims” of the Whitneys, and “there’s an agenda, and someone else is benefiting.”
Tactics and Strategies (Prognostic Function)

Tactics used by those within the quality of life frame were networking with neighbors, meetings in homes, regular telephone contacts, gathering and reading information from other groups involved in similar controversies, and writing individual and group letters to the newspaper, MPCA, and government officials. They were also behind efforts to elect a new set of candidates for all but one township board position over the period of one year, and quickly pass through a revised zoning ordinance that would prevent Mr. Johnson from constructing his building. Assuring the decision making positions on the township board were occupied by people from their own frame was a central tactic of the quality of life frame.

In contrast, the quality of life frame viewed the agribusiness frame as controlling county and state government as well as the court system. They felt it was with the assistance of individuals in positions of authority and complicity with the Johnsons and other farmers with production contracts that the agribusiness group tried to “sneak” factory farms into their community. Tactics of the agribusiness frame were viewed as “underhanded”, and they did things “under the table.” One person interviewed described agribusiness tactics as “lie, cheat, steal, whatever it takes.” Another person stated, “They’ve stolen from the community about as much as you can steal.” While most of this was directed at the large contractor and similar firms, one person did extend this dishonesty to Steve Johnson, stating.

There was so much lying going on and dishonesty about the whole situation that it was really sad to see somebody that at one point you were friends with turn his back on the community and do anything it took to have his way, regardless of what anyone else thought. Since then we haven’t talked, and I don’t imagine we ever will.
Reason for Action (Motivation Function)

The central motivation of the quality of life group was protection – protection of water, soil, air, local roads, quality of life, and in general, what they viewed as their traditional way of life. As one individual stated, “[we want] to ensure a quality of life for the residents of our community.” Many expressed a concern with a future clean up of the environmental impact of large-scale livestock production in their community that the business interests would leave up to the local community.

A lot of the older farmers, and around here it’s fourth, fifth, sixth generations that are carrying on with the original family farm are comfortable with the quality of life we have and try and maintain their facilities with that in mind . . . this has been what has worked for many years, it’s working for us now, why do we need anything different? It’s just going to ruin what we have going on. I have nothing against large corporate farms, but they gotta go do their thing where it fits in. Frances Township is too small, neighbors are too close, the community just is not ready and probably never will be ready for the impact from these facilities.

Those with a quality of life frame clearly viewed the motivation of the agribusiness frame as greed, making money no matter what the costs. One person stated “There’s got to be a way for people to get rewards without hurting others.” And while most within the quality of life frame pointed to the Whitneys as having the greed, this was not universal. One person interviewed described a telephone conversation he had with Steve Johnson when he first found out about the planned expansion.

I called up Steve and asked him, “hey what are ya doin? You can’t impact a community like this” . . . We were good friends, but then he’s kind of head-set in a way that well, this is good. This is good for me. Who cares about anyone else in the community. This is the way farming’s gonna go. And I want to be one of the first one’s in.
Elements of Frances Township Frames in the Larger Group

Consistent with Homans’ model, elements identified in the frames of community controversy in Frances Township were sought in a larger group of six counties. These six contexts for examination were selected in conjunction with other GEIS researchers in a process that included several criteria related to animal agriculture and community controversy. This section summarizes these interviews with producers, community leaders, local elected officials, government agency personnel and other local citizens in a manner that conceptually highlights themes in respondents' comments. Within each of these themes, elements of the agribusiness frame and quality of life frame are identified. These themes and elements were identified by carefully re-reading respondents’ interview comments and transcripts from roundtable discussions, and identifying themes across individual responses.

Theme 1: Changes in the Structure of Agriculture

The most dominant theme in the personal contacts was change in the structure of agriculture, and animal production specifically. This came through in all of the case counties and roundtable discussions.

"Get Big or Get Out"

This refrain was heard repeatedly to describe how current and former Minnesota farmers view their options in terms of animal agriculture, and is consistent with the agribusiness frame found in Frances Township. Swine and poultry producers were the ones who most often expressed this sentiment. It was less prevalent (but not absent) in the dairy and beef cattle sectors. One hog producer indicated expansion is
all about dollars . . . If you don't have enough dollars to live, then you go find another income producing unit. Well, that's another hog. That means you have more hogs.

Another stated,

It's the only way for some of the small producers to be able to abide by some of the new regulations that were brought about and to be able to stay there . . . if you put enough animal units behind it, suddenly everything becomes feasible. But at 50 or 100 hogs, you can't afford some of the things you've asked them to do.

Vertical integration in poultry and livestock production was often pointed to by those with a quality of life frame as the means that producers use to expand. Many suggested "what happened in poultry will happen in pork", referring to the vertical integration of these sectors of animal agriculture. The notion of farmers becoming the employees or even referred to as "slaves" of corporate-owned agriculture was a recurrent prediction in interviews. The ownership arrangements of contract production (specifically in poultry and swine) were viewed by some as a precursor to increasing control and even ownership of farm site production by national and international corporations. This is consistent with the quality of life frame in Frances Township.

In both interviews and roundtable discussions the term "corporate farm" was used to refer to both vertically integrated and large, multi-owner farming operations (not necessarily vertically integrated operations). While these animal agriculture facilities are within the scope of Minnesota's anti-corporate farming laws, it is interesting to note this differentiation by those from the quality of life frame – which includes farmers - that these are not family farms, but corporate farms. Again, this was an element of the quality of life frame in Frances Township.
Impacts of Expansion

In the larger group, most within the quality of life frame focused their concerns on fear of potential hazards to the environment and a reduced quality of life caused by the growth in confined animal feeding operations for poultry, swine, and dairy production. This is consistent with the quality of life frame in Frances Township, where odor, environment, and quality of life were viewed as the greatest potential impacts. Those in the larger group also indicated concern regarding destruction done to township and county roads by heavy equipment and trucks that regularly travel to and from large animal facilities. Complaints that these vehicles destroy the roads, track roads with animal manure, and drive at speeds beyond safe limits were not uncommon. Fear of reduced property values was also a common thread. Of those interviewed in the larger group with this concern, only two had actually sold their homes and only one perceived the reduction from their home’s appraisal price (25%) as resulting from the location next to a large scale confined dairy.

"Camaraderie to Individualism"

Both small and large producers suggested that changes in agriculture have changed the shared production practices of farmers. Those within the agribusiness frame indicated large operations are very independent, not needing to rely on shared equipment or labor exchanges with other producers any longer. One person explained that farmers are more “self-contained”: they don't interact with many people, nor have a need for broader support. Another called this the transition “from camaraderie to individualism.” But those with a quality of life perspective felt that this represented not only a change in production practices, but also a decrease in opportunities for interaction between farm operators. While this
appears to reflect a general trend in agriculture rather than one specific to animal production, it was a point made in many personal contacts.

**Theme 2: Quality of Life**

The impacts of changed production practices in animal agriculture are viewed in distinctly different ways by those within the agribusiness and quality of life frames.

Like those with the agribusiness frame in Frances Township, those with an agribusiness frame in the larger group who had moved into confinement-based production viewed this change as improving their lives. A common theme was that expanding their animal operations helped create the financial means to bring their children into the farm operation. Without expanding or adding livestock they would not have made it in farming. By adding numbers to their herd/flock size, or putting up one or more CAFOs, they were able to spend more time with their family and less time away from home employed off the farm. From this perspective, CAFOs allow under-employed farm operators to become more fully employed in their own operations.

For farmers and non-farmers in the larger group within the quality of life frame, proximity to large-scale animal agriculture facility was viewed as decreasing quality of life. Odors and physical discomfort were pointed to as results of confinement production sites. Also pointed to were stories of headaches, nausea, nasal irritation, and respiratory problems attributed to livestock and poultry facilities. One elderly man stated

I woke up in the middle of the night and said we’ve got to get out of here... we were getting a headache and sicker and it was just overwhelming at that particular time... we could not even think of eating a meal in our own home.
In three cases, respondents retold accounts of nausea and vomiting while being in their yard due to the overwhelming odor from a neighboring confined animal facility. One woman who lived near a confined dairy operation reported breaking out in hives when manure was being spread on neighboring fields one-quarter of a mile from her home. Dust and fumes from large-scale confinement systems were another aspect of the quality of life frame. The decrease in quality of life within this frame in the larger group is consistent with the quality of life frame in Frances Township.

**Theme 3: Community Interaction**

*Institutional Interactions - Hostility, Neglect and Inattention*

A theme prevalent in all six counties of the larger group, and in both frames, was that institutions are seen as responsible for much of the blame in perpetuating a hostile and inequitable community climate. While these institutions are often located outside the community, the impact of their action (or inaction) plays out locally. Many from the quality of life frame were highly critical of local and state agencies such as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and sometimes of local planning and zoning as well as county feedlot officers and extension educators. They view these officers as complicit in developing dysfunctional and arbitrary land use policies that exacerbate problems rather than solve them. Many of the complaints registered concerned access, particularly in the case of MPCA. Phone calls were not returned, letters were not answered, and they felt a general lack of attention and responsiveness. When these contacts are not responded to, community members felt more inclined to take matters into their own hands. The comments of one roundtable participant suggest his frustration with both local and state institutions.
I have tried to get information from agencies. It is difficult to do. You ask for information but you don't necessarily get it all. So, getting the information you are talking about is pretty hard to do. When you do go to a public hearing, the applicant is often given an unlimited amount of time to present their information, but people who want to speak in opposition are limited to how long they can speak...sometimes to 1 minute, sometimes 2 minutes, sometimes 3 minutes. If you feel this an issue that is going to affect you for the rest of your life, as a feedlot does, to be limited to 2 minutes is extremely frustrating.

This was consistent with the lack of trust in county and state institutions found within the quality of life frame in Frances Township.

Those with an agribusiness frame likewise feel unattended by MPCA, which they view as generally unresponsive as indicated by unreturned phone calls, unanswered letters, and reviews not completed in a timely manner. In the case of Frances Township those with the agribusiness frame felt the MPCA had initially held up the Johnson expansion application while they waited for the citizen petition for the Environmental Assessment Worksheet.

Like those with an agribusiness frame in Frances Township, those in the larger group recognized a need for zoning ordinances around animal facilities, but perceive opportunities to continue in farming to be obstructed by burdensome regulations that come from environmental planning. In many instances they brought up the idea that a few "bad actors" have resulted in a burden for all producers.

I think the focus from our state agencies should be switched from enforcement regulation to, "Let’s get some money so we can fix these things and keep these guys in business." It doesn’t do any good to regulate them out of business. Let’s help them get in compliance standards.

From the agribusiness frame the cultural climate is seen as increasingly hostile and 'anti-animal agriculture,' rather than supporting a culture that is respectful of the business of farming. Many expressed concern that more state regulations were just another example of
an increasingly unfriendly agriculture milieu in Minnesota. This is consistent with the agribusiness frame of Frances Township which viewed its more restrictive ordinance as a message that animal agriculture was no longer a local priority.

Land Grant University Complicity

Those within the quality of life frame in the larger group often pointed to the land grant university as complicit in changes in animal agriculture production and support of the agribusiness frame through research and programming priorities that encourage the development of confined animal feeding operations. Like county and state agencies this is an institution located outside the community, but with local impact. One farmer in his 60s explained that men of his generation believed sending their sons to college for a four-year agriculture degree was the right thing to do. But he felt many of those children returned home with very different ideas about farming. They pushed for change and expansion of the livestock operations, including the construction of confined production buildings, and forced their families into considerable debt in the process. He told us he had seen many family conflicts that resulted, including within his own family.

While this theme was not part of the agribusiness frame in Frances Township, the emphasis on technology and innovation in large-scale agriculture is certainly a thread that runs through the agribusiness frame in both examinations.

Organizing Efforts and the Quality of Life Frame

Community responses to the siting or expansion of an animal agriculture facility are quite diverse. While in Frances Township this took the form of an ad hoc group of
community members, in some contexts groups are formally organized to combat what they perceive to be a threat to their way of life through the possibility of environmental hazards and social maladies. In two of the counties in the larger examination, an organization has taken the lead in highlighting problems they associate with confined animal agriculture (dairy and swine). This organization has been successful in calling attention to local oversights and state regulation. Local controversy surrounding siting and expansion of animal agriculture was predominant in these two counties.

Such a response to animal agriculture may not always succeed in achieving the desired future outcomes, but it can have the impact of reinvigorating community capacity to strategically act on their own behalf rather than viewing themselves as helpless victims. Many people, especially women, said that because of the community conflict over animal agriculture, they took a leadership role in opposing the facility. Other individuals have not developed such potential for action. Some individuals have adopted a fatalist perspective, viewing themselves as condemned to live with what they termed the “stench” and the undemocratic control by those with local power. Clearly it was the former perspective that was found in the quality of life frame in Frances Township.

The quality of life frame includes an element of risk for those who speak against the siting or expansion of a large animal agriculture facility, seen both in Frances Township and in the larger group. One example provided to us was an individual being harassed in public by those from the agribusiness frame because he signed a petition to request an environmental impact study before construction could proceed.

I signed it not because I was opposed to them coming, but because I thought it was good to have the study done so it wasn’t put in an environmentally unfriendly place. One of the owners jumped me on it... she very angrily spoke
to me about how much money that [the environmental impact study] would
cost them. Another time I was … at a place of business and another farmer in
the neighborhood started making comments about "here comes that
[respondent’s name] that anti-agriculture one". I ignored him, and it kept
getting louder and saying it so everybody in the building could hear. I just
assumed it was because I had signed the petition. It got to where he was
hollering it over and over about anti-agriculture [respondent’s name].

Another woman in the same neighborhood signed the petition, and as a result the
owner of the dairy went to her workplace and told her employer “that they shouldn’t have
somebody employed [there] who was opposed to their enterprise.”

*Change in Personal Interactions between Farmers*

Within agriculture there appears to be a widening gap between those who have
expanded into large-scale facilities and those who are trying to maintain their small and mid-
sized operations. The interviews in the larger group suggest these two groups are divided in
terms of the agribusiness and quality of life frames. Large producers are not as likely to
belong to local commodity associations as are small and middle-sized producers. These are
historically important, strong local organizations whose memberships, according to local
producers, have decreased in recent years. In one county two-thirds of the current members
of the Pork Producers Association are non-producers, while producers comprised two-thirds
of the membership just ten years ago. A current member recited names of several large pork
producers in the area who are not members.

Large producers, particularly those operating confined swine operations, perceived a
sense of animosity on the part of small producers who are struggling to stay in farming. This
was sometimes referred to as “jealousy” also part of the agribusiness frame in Frances
Township. The commodity pricing advantages enjoyed by large producers were clearly a
sore spot for the small producers who were interviewed. Both large and small producers indicated there is a lot of “talk” within the community about different producers and the choices they make, and much of this conversation is with farmers who have taken similar paths. In other words, the large producers network with other large producers, and the small producers network with their size peers.

Patterns across Examinations

This examination of frames within communities where there has been controversy surrounding animal production practices has identified several elements of behavior. There is consistency in the opposing frames of interpretation in controversies as elements of the agribusiness and quality of life frames identified in Frances Township were also identified within the larger group of counties.

The agribusiness frame identified here views large-scale and confinement production practices as an unstoppable trend in agriculture, and farmers who want to be successful will proceed in this direction. In fact, this is viewed by most as the only way for family farmers to remain in livestock production. This is viewed as legal right, and local and state regulation should not be enacted that will interfere with large-scale production practices. Within the quality of life frame, large-scale and confinement production is viewed as a threat to the local environment, family health and welfare, and a traditional way of life. This frame is clearly focused on private sphere issues and takes action in personal and local ways to prevent or respond to livestock production facilities that are perceived as industrial or corporate, particularly confined animal feeding operations operated through production contracts.
Frames in Community Controversy and Conventional-Alternative Agriculture Paradigms

The research in Frances Township and the larger group of six counties points to two dominant frames of interpretation, agribusiness and quality of life. As discussed in Chapter III, Beus and Dunlap (1990) proposed a model for understanding the two dominant paradigms within contemporary agriculture classed as conventional and alternative agriculture. This section compares elements of the agribusiness and quality of life frames identified in this research with the dimensions and elements of the conventional and alternative agriculture paradigms.

Beus and Dunlap suggest all components of the current debate in agriculture fall within six dimensions: centralization vs. decentralization; dependence vs. independence; competition vs. community; domination of nature vs. harmony with nature; specialization vs. diversity; and exploitation vs. restraint. Chiappe and Flora (1998) identify two additional dimensions from the perspectives of women in alternative agriculture – quality family life and spirituality/religiosity. Each of these eight dimensions has individual elements. While the agribusiness and quality of life frames identified in this research contain elements of all eight dimensions of the conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms, they are not analogous. Table 6 lists the elements for each dimension of the conventional and alternative agricultural paradigms. The elements that are also found in the agribusiness and quality of life frames are indicated in bold type.

Within three dimensions of the conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms, there is a high degree of resonance with the agribusiness and quality of life frames. All elements within the dimension of dependence vs. independence were present in the agribusiness and
Table 6. Elements of Frames in Agriculture Paradigms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Agriculture</th>
<th>Alternative Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centralization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Decentralization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/international production, processing, and marketing.</td>
<td>More local/regional production, processing, and marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated populations; fewer farmers</td>
<td>Dispersed populations; more farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated control of land, resources and capital</td>
<td>Dispersed control of land, resources and capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Independence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large, capital-intensive production units and technology</td>
<td>Smaller, low-capital production units and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy reliance on external sources of energy, inputs and credit.</td>
<td>Reduced reliance on external sources of energy, inputs, and credit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumerism and dependence on the market</td>
<td>More personal and community self-sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary emphasis on science, specialists and experts</td>
<td>Primary emphasis on personal knowledge, skills, and local wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cooperation; self-interest</td>
<td>Increased cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm traditions and rural culture out-dated</td>
<td>Preservation of farm traditions and rural culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small rural communities not necessary to agriculture</td>
<td>Small rural communities essential to agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm work a drudgery, labor an input to be minimized</td>
<td>Farm work rewarding; labor an essential to be made meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming is a business only</td>
<td>Farming is a way of life as well as a business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary emphasis on speed, quantity, and profit</td>
<td>Primary emphasis on permanence, quality, and beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domination of nature</strong></td>
<td><strong>Harmony with nature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humans are separate from and superior to nature</td>
<td>Humans are part of and subject to nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature consists primarily of resources to be used</td>
<td>Nature is valued primarily for its own sake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-cycle incomplete, decay (recycling wastes) neglected</td>
<td>Life-cycle complete, growth and decay balanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human-made systems imposed on nature</td>
<td>Natural ecosystems are imitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production maintained by agricultural chemicals</td>
<td>Production maintained by development of healthy soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly processed, nutrient-fortified food</td>
<td>Minimally processed, naturally nutritious food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Diversity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow genetic base</td>
<td>Broad genetic base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most plants grown in monocultures</td>
<td>More plants grown in polycultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-cropping in succession</td>
<td>Multiple crops in complementary rotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation of crops and livestock</td>
<td>Integration of crops and livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized production systems</td>
<td>Locally adapted production systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly specialized, reductionistic science and technology</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary, systems-oriented science and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploitation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Restraint</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External costs often ignored</td>
<td>All external costs must be considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term benefits outweigh long-term consequences</td>
<td>Short-term and long-term outcomes equally important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on heavy use of nonrenewable resources</td>
<td>Based on renewable resources; nonrenewable resources conserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great confidence in science and technology</td>
<td>Limited confidence in science and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High consumption to maintain economic growth</td>
<td>Consumption restrained to benefit future generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial success; busy lifestyles; materialism</td>
<td>Self-discovery; simpler lifestyles; nonmaterialism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Agriculture</th>
<th>Alternative Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Family Life</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved family health due to safer farming practices and reduced reliance on chemicals</td>
<td>Reduced off-farm employment and more time with family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spirituality/Religiosity</strong></td>
<td>Alternative agriculture consistent with stewardship of the land and traditional religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony and connectedness to the rhythms of nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bold elements are found in both agribusiness-quality of life frames and conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms

quality of life frames. This is the dimension with the highest degree of correspondence between the conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms and the agribusiness-quality of life frames. Within the conventional agriculture paradigm, there is correspondence between elements in the agribusiness frame and elements within the dimension of exploitation, although not the case in the parallel dimension of restraint in the alternative agriculture paradigm. Within the alternative agriculture paradigm there is consistency between elements in the quality of life frame and elements within the dimension of community, although not in the parallel dimension of competition in the conventional agriculture paradigm. There is also consistency between the elements of the dimension of spirituality/religiosity and the quality of life frame.

Within the centralization vs. decentralization dimension only one of three elements in each of the paradigms was present in the agribusiness and quality of life frames. These frames had the lowest degree of resonance within this dimension of the conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms. The dimensions of domination of nature vs. harmony with nature and specialization vs. diversity have some elements found in the agribusiness and
quality of life frames, suggesting some level of resonance. This was also the case with the
dimensions of quality family life and spirituality/religiosity within the alternative agriculture
paradigm and the quality of life frame in this research.

This comparison of the agribusiness and quality of life frames with the conventional
and alternative agriculture paradigms points to some general observations. First, a large part
of the inconsistency of the agribusiness frame described in this research with the
conventional agriculture paradigm appears to be based in the ‘family farm’ component of
vertical integration through production contracts. This is particularly the case in the
dimensions of centralization and competition. Beus and Dunlap (1990) base the
conventional agricultural paradigm in part on intensive animal husbandry in large, corporate
owned livestock production sites. This doesn’t take into account producers on family farm
sites entering contract production within vertical integration or farmer to farmer contracts. In
states like Minnesota with anti-corporate farming laws, these are the forms that expansion in
animal agriculture is taking.

Second, the highest consistency in the conventional-alternative agriculture and
agribusiness-quality of life frames is in the dimensions of dependence vs. independence. All
elements in each of the agriculture paradigms were identified within the frames of the
community controversies examined here. This suggests further exploration beyond the scope
of this research is warranted.

Finally, there was correspondence between the frames identified here and the
dimensions suggested by Chiappe and Flora within the alternative agriculture paradigm. The
highest degree of correspondence was within the dimension of spirituality/religiosity. These
dimensions were identified as relevant to women in alternative agriculture, but had not been previously identified by men within the paradigm.

This final observation points to additional discussion of gender. There is increasing interest in examining society as gendered, and growing acknowledgment of the gendered nature of social processes (Acker 1990; Little & Jones, 2000). Acker (1992) provides a framework for examining social structures as gendered institutions, and differentiates between organizations of reproduction and organizations of production.

Organizations of reproduction are those involved in intergenerational and day-to-day functions in society - the reproduction of people. Organizations of reproduction are those responsible for care of children and other family members, education, sleeping, eating, and other family related tasks. In many ways, the quality of life frame in the community controversies discussed here falls within the sphere of reproduction. The quality of life frame considered the problem as a threat to the private sphere - contamination of home well water, odors, and a general decrease in personal quality of life caused by construction of 'industrial agriculture' in the community. The tactics used are based in their local and personal relationships (networking with neighbors, meetings in neighbors homes, daily telephone contacts) and external connections to groups and individuals with a similar frame embroiled in similar controversies. The central motivation of the quality of life group was protection — protection of water, soil, air, local roads, quality of life, and in general, what they viewed as their traditional way of life.

Organizations of production, within Acker's definition, are concerned with business and industry - production of monetary and material goods. This includes control of the state at the national and world level. The agribusiness frame identified in
community controversies in Minnesota seems consistent with the sphere of production. Advanced use of technology in livestock production is described as a natural progression that is anticipated to continue. Growth in agricultural production is considered consistent with industrialization of other “industries.” The tactics and strategies of the agribusiness frame were based on legal rights, and community members should not have the ability to interfere with their livelihood and ability to increase income from their agricultural business.

While the prospect that frames adopted in community controversy are gendered has not been explored in the social sciences literature, it is suggested here that initiating this discussion is timely.
CHAPTER VII.
CONCLUSIONS

This research has explored community controversy in rural areas. A detailed analysis of the controversy in Frances Township was undertaken, and elements identified in these observations were sought in a larger group of rural Minnesota counties. These were sites of recent episodes of local dispute over livestock production practices - a type of controversy increasingly taking place in rural areas. The course of controversy over time was considered, as were frames adopted by individuals and groups involved in these place-based communities. Consistent with the case method approach of Homans, this examination “began with a flat description of events within a single group; then we went on to a statement of the customs of an unspecified but limited number of groups (1950:34).”

Course and Dynamics of Community Controversy

The first objective of this research was to examine the degree of support for the pattern of tendencies in community controversy posited by Coleman (1957) using a type of controversy that has emerged in the last decade. Examination of elements in the recent community controversy in Frances Township supports the model posited by Coleman. There is ample evidence of dynamic tendencies in issues and social organization in this controversy. The specific issue of the feedlot expansion transformed to general issues of zoning, agriculture versus multiple use, and the industrialization of animal agriculture. New issues regarding the Johnson family’s success in farming and their connection to the
Whitneys arose. Disagreement evolved to antagonism in the community as personal attacks replaced dialogue between neighbors.

The controversy also changed the social organization of the community as social relations between those opposed to the expansion and those who supported it were polarized. A new ad hoc organization was formed to oppose the expansion, while ties between the Whitneys, the Johnson family and their supporters increased. New leaders emerged in the group opposed to the expansion that had not been considered community leaders before the controversy. The local church was drawn into the controversy as its membership was divided, with the Johnson family eventually leaving the congregation. Communication throughout the controversy took place informally rather than through the local newspaper.

While the course of controversy Coleman put forth is supported in this research, two areas are identified that Coleman does not significantly address - the role of community members not involved in community controversy and the involvement of individuals from outside the community as the controversy proceeds. In both Frances Township and the larger group there were community members who did not feel directly affected because their property was not located in the same vicinity as a large-scale animal barn or for other reasons they were not involved in either side of a community controversy. And both supporters and those opposed to the Johnson expansion increasingly included individuals from outside the community as the controversy progressed. The impact of these outside individuals was not thoroughly examined in this research. These two additional elements in this course of controversy suggest a need for expanding Coleman's model to include an analysis of the roles of bystanders and outsiders in community controversy.
Frames in Community Controversy

The second objective of this research was to identify frames of interpretation found in community controversies regarding animal production and compare these with conventional and alternative agriculture paradigms. Frames were described by their diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational functions (Snow and Benford, 1988). What emerged in Frances Township were two frames - the agribusiness frame and the quality of life frame.

Within the agribusiness frame the source of the Frances Township controversy was unwillingness on the part of the Johnson’s neighbors to understand that practices of raising livestock have changed. There was a view that technology provides a better way, and change in livestock production follows the industrialization of other “industries.” Tactics and strategies of the agribusiness frame (prognostic function) were based on legal rights. Farmers had the right to raise animals on their own land using whatever practices they chose within the bounds of reasonable regulation. Neighbors should not have the ability to stop this on a case-by-case basis. The motivation for the agribusiness frame in Frances Township was couched in terms of preserving the family farm. It was often stated that by constructing the barn and increasing the Johnson farm income, Steve Johnson could give up his off-farm job and his young son would be able to join the farm operation in the future.

The quality of life frame considered the problem in Frances Township as the threat to the local environment, contamination of well water, odors, deterioration of local infrastructure and the general decrease in quality of life that would be caused by the construction of the Johnson’s hog barn. But the source of the controversy was clearly viewed as the Whitneys. In letters to the newspaper, quotes to local reporters, and interviews with those involved, the Whitneys were characterized as forcing “corporate farming” and
"industrialized factory type farming" into the community by "convincing small farmers to raise their animals for them." Tactics used by those with the quality of life frame were networking with neighbors, meetings in homes, regular telephone contacts, gathering and reading information from other groups involved in similar controversies, and writing individual and group letters to the newspaper, MPCA, and government officials. Central to the tactics of the quality of life frame were assuring that decision making positions on the township board were occupied by people from their own frame. The central motivation of the quality of life group was protection – protection of water, soil, air, local roads, quality of life, and in general, what they viewed as their traditional way of life. Many expressed a concern with a future clean up of the environmental impact of large-scale livestock production in their community that the business interests would leave up to the local community.

Within the case method approach used here, observations were made at the third level to identify elements of the agribusiness and quality of life frames. These were subsequently identified within the themes of the broader research in six Minnesota counties. The combined observations at the initial level in Frances Township, and at the level of six Minnesota counties point to two distinct frames of interpretation within community controversies surrounding animal agriculture practices. The agribusiness frame described here views large-scale and confinement production practices as an unstoppable trend in agriculture, and those farmers who want to be successful will proceed in this direction. This is viewed as their right, and regulation should not be enacted that will interfere.

The quality of life frame views large-scale and confinement production as a threat to the local environment, family health and welfare, and a traditional way of life. This frame is
clearly focused on private sphere issues, and takes action in personal and local ways to prevent or respond to livestock production facilities that are perceived as industrial or corporate, particularly CAFOs operated through production contracts.

Comparison of these frames with the conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms identified by Beus and Dunlap (1990) and Chiappe and Flora (1998) points to a level of compatibility. There was correspondence within all eight dimensions between the agribusiness frame and the conventional agriculture paradigm, and the quality of life frame and the alternative agriculture paradigm. All elements within the dimension of dependence vs. independence were present in the agribusiness and quality of life frames. This is the dimension with the highest degree of correspondence between elements of the conventional-alternative agriculture paradigms and the agribusiness-quality of life frames. At the other extreme, within the centralization vs. decentralization dimension only one of three elements in each of the paradigms was present in the agribusiness and quality of life frames. It is suggested that inconsistency of the agribusiness frame described in this research with the conventional agriculture paradigm is based in the ‘family farm’ component of vertical integration through production contracts.

While Chiappe and Flora identify two additional dimensions to the alternative agriculture paradigm, they do not identify parallel dimensions in the conventional agriculture paradigm. This examination of the agribusiness and quality of life frames, and their correspondence to conventional and alternative agriculture paradigms, points to the following parallel dimensions in the conventional agriculture paradigm. I would suggest the parallel dimension to quality family life is family as farming partners. While those within the alternative agriculture paradigm and the corresponding quality of life frame sought increased
quality time with family members, those within the conventional agriculture paradigm and the agribusiness frame sought to increase their farm income so additional family members (often a son) could join the farming operation. This meant more work time. Further, I would suggest the parallel to the alternative agriculture dimension of *spirituality/religiosity* is *industrial atheism*. What I am suggesting here is that those within the conventional agriculture paradigm and the corresponding agribusiness frame view religion or spirituality as belonging in a distinctly separate sphere from agriculture. Agriculture is viewed as an industry or means of production not impacted by religious beliefs. Nature is viewed as something that will be controlled through technology. For example, using drugs in sows so they can produce larger litters more frequently.

**Table 7. Additional Dimensions of the Conventional Agriculture Paradigm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Agriculture</th>
<th>Alternative Agriculture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family as Farming Partners</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quality Family Life</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of chemical and mechanized practices allows larger farm operations and increased income</td>
<td>Improved family health due to safer farming practices and reduced reliance on chemicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion allows additional family members to join the farming operation</td>
<td>Reduced off-farm employment and more time with family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Industrial Atheism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm industry and spirituality/religion located in separate spheres</td>
<td>Alternative apiculture consistent with stewardship of the land and traditional religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Spirituality/Religiosity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taming or controlling nature with technology</td>
<td>Harmony and connectedness to the rhythms of nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future Research Considerations**

This research lends itself to further discussion in several areas. The following questions are suggested for further exploration.
First, at what point in a community controversy can the course be interrupted? Coleman is not proposing that once set in motion a controversy necessarily spirals through the dynamics in issues and social organization that are discussed here. Rather, through conscious effort or as a result of particular community conditions the development of a community controversy may be interrupted. He points out the local structure of authority, the social structure of the community and other differences in communities have the ability to shape the course of community controversy. His later work (1973) holds even greater promise for influencing the course of events as it points to an individual actor making rational decisions based on potential outcome and impacts. Not considered within this research, but certainly pertinent to controversies is the conflict literature found within political science (e.g. Schattschneider, 1990), and the work on conflict resolution in post-revolutionary societies.

The case of Frances Township demonstrates how community controversy can lead to breakdown in social relationships within a community. Continued examination of controversies could point to elements in dynamics with particular emphasis on interrupting the course before the issues change and social relations are polarized and antagonistic. This is consistent with Coleman and Homans, who point to the need for continual observations to build our understanding of the phenomenon.

We shall set up some hypotheses — and they will remain hypotheses because we shall only set them up, not prove them — that may sum up a few aspects of social behavior in an unlimited number of groups all over the world. (Homans, 1950:34-5)

Second, are strained relationships over livestock production a focused concern within only certain parts of specific rural communities? The research identified a group of
bystanders in community controversy that is not substantially addressed in Coleman’s theory. In both Frances Township and the larger group there were community members who are not involved in animal agriculture or not directly affected. These were generally community members located a greater physical distance from the Johnson farm, and/or had little social interaction with local residents on either side of this controversy. Both proponents and opponents saw these community members as generally unsympathetic to the issues. This research did not identify any impact they had on the community controversy. This alerts us to a need for further research specifically focused on those who do not consider themselves stakeholders in controversies over animal agriculture.

Third, are the concepts of framing useful in examining community action? In this research concepts of framing from research on social movement organizations were applied to community controversy. This use of a macro-level construct at the meso-level was quite useful in this case pointing to a need for further examination of the use of framing in community investigations. It also draws out a connection between community controversies and social movements. When does controversy become a social movement? In a sense, action at the community level in a controversy could be considered at one end of a continuum with social movements located at the other end. Additional discussion of the potential relationship between community controversy and social movements appears warranted.

And finally, can frames in community controversy be gendered? While there is increasing interest in examining organizations as gendered, the prospect that frames adopted in controversy are gendered has not been explored in the social sciences literature. Discussion of gender within frames of community controversy was introduced here in a preliminary manner. It was suggested that the quality of life frame in community
controversies falls within the sphere of organizations of reproduction, and the agribusiness frame falls within the sphere of organizations of production. With growing acknowledgment of the gendered nature of social processes, it seems initiating this discussion is timely.

**Concluding Comments**

The goal here was to expand our comprehension of community controversy by examining sites of dispute over construction and expansion of livestock facilities in rural Minnesota. Controversies surrounding animal production and livestock facilities are complex, and this research addresses only a slice of potential areas of inquiry. There is obviously further research needed.

Over the past year I have been a guest in the homes and offices of Minnesota rural residents where they shared very personal stories with me of their experiences. In most cases this meant taking an hour or more out of their busy schedules to meet; yet very few people declined the request to be interviewed. The willingness of the average person to meet with a university researcher to discuss what has gone on in their community and their own life continues to amaze me. No matter what side of the issue they were on, nearly all people I spoke with had a sense that things could have been different. What they perceived as negative change in their community and personal lives could have been prevented. They had the same sense I had when I started this research: the dynamics of controversy move a community forward without opportunity to return. In many cases here that meant ties with neighbors and friends were broken that remain fractured even several years later. By sharing their experiences, I had a sense these rural residents hoped something could be done to
prevent this from occurring in other communities. Perhaps something positive could come out of what in all cases they viewed as a very negative situation.

As Coleman (1957) points out, communities of place have long been sites of local dispute. Understanding dimensions of controversy and different frames in dispute enhances the ability of community leaders to benefit from the experiences of other rural communities and affect the course of local controversy. In our rapidly changing society, diffusion of knowledge from community to community and generation to generation cannot keep pace with changes in events. Coleman suggests, and I concur, it is the role of the social scientist to increase the rate of diffusion and provide examples to communities.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

INTERVIEW AND ROUNDTABLE QUESTIONS
Semi-structured Interview Format for Frances Township

1. What is your relationship, if any, to animal agriculture in your community? (e.g., producer, neighbor of livestock operation, feedlot officer, SWCD, etc.)

2. If a producer: Are you a producer of any of the following
   - Beef _______ head
   - Dairy _______ head
   - Swine _______ head
   - Chicken _______ head
   - Turkey _______ head

3. What changes in animal agriculture have you witnessed in your community over the past 10 years?

4. Have you noticed any changes over the past 10 years in the way farmers interact with other community members that are related to changes in animal agriculture (e.g., changes in social relationships at church, community events)?

5. Do you sense there has been any change in community neighborliness as a result of changes in animal agriculture?

6. Do you think people in this community are willing to entertain a diversity of viewpoints regarding animal agriculture?

7a. Have changes in animal agriculture impacted your quality of life?

7b. Have they impacted your family's quality of life?

8. Would you say there has been controversy or conflict over changes in animal agriculture in your community? Were you involved in this conflict?

9a. Describe for me the individuals and groups who supported the development of the hog barn at the Johnson farm?

9b. How do individuals and groups who supported the development define the cause or source of the controversy?

9c. What are the strategies used by the individuals and groups who supported the development of the livestock facilities?

9d. What do individuals and groups who supported the development state as the reason for their actions?

10a. Describe for me the individuals and groups who opposed the development of the hog barn at the Johnson farm?

10b. How do individuals and groups who opposed the development define the cause or source of the controversy?
Semi-structured Interview Format for Frances Township (continued)

10c. What are the strategies used by the individuals and groups who opposed the development of the livestock facilities?

10d. What do individuals and groups who opposed the development state as the reason for their actions?

11. Which of the following do you feel best describes the impact of the controversy on your community
   ______ No lasting impact on relationships in the community
   ______ There are divisions in the community, but they are being resolved
   ______ There are permanent community divisions that will take a long time to be resolved

12. Given your experiences in this community, can you think of one thing or action that would help resolve community controversy or conflict regarding animal agriculture?

13. ______ Male ______ Female

14. Anyone under the age of 18 living in the household? ______ Yes ______ No

15. Age: ________

16. Location of residence.
   ______ On a working farm outside the city limits (__________ Township)
   ______ On a building site but not a working farm outside the city limits (__________ Township)
   ______ Live within the city limits of ______________________

17. How many years have you been a member of this community? ________

18. Level of involvement in the controversy regarding development of livestock facility
   ______ Supported the development
   ______ Not involved or no opinion on the expansion
   ______ Opposed to the development

19. What do you consider to be your primary occupation? __________________

Are there others who you would like to recommend who might be interested in speaking to me on this issue?

Name __________________ Address/Town__________ Phone ________

Semi-structured Format of GEIS Key Informant Interviews

1. What is the structure of agriculture in the county, and how has it changed?
2. What is your involvement in animal agriculture in this county?
3. What marketing system options are available for county producers?
4. What types of financial assistance are available to contract growers?
5. What jobs have been created by these operations?
6. Where are workers drawn from?
7. Is there a transient work force?
8. Are there local shelters, food pantries, etc., and have they been impacted by workers at these operations?
9. Have there been other financial investments as a result of these operations?
10. Have there been community conflicts over issues related to animal agriculture?
11. How has the community problem-solved these issues?
12. What is the current source of public debate regarding the beef/swine/dairy/poultry industry, and who is involved in this debate?
13. Is there an inspection process currently in place?
14. What opportunities/resources are available for feedlot operators?
15. Have operators in the county failed to comply with state or local guidelines?
16. Have there been lawsuits/major concerns?
17. What are the potential constraints to success for feedlot owners?
18. Who are the major stakeholders in feedlot operations in the county?

Are there others who you would like to recommend who might be interested in speaking to me on this issue?

Name ___________________________ Address/Town ___________________________ Phone ___________________________
Format of GEIS Roundtable Discussions

Questions from Land Use Conflicts and Regulation Team

1. Objective Level Question/ Fact-based
   • Question to ask each person to answer going around the table -
     Were you directly involved in a conflict over a feedlot? And if yes, briefly, in
     5-7 words, say what event caused you to get involved.
     Ex. - Yes, My neighbor asked me to get involved
     Yes, I was the operator people were complaining about
     Yes, I smelled nasty smells

2. Interpretive Level Questions/ Values, Meaning, Purpose
   • What specific actions, if any, did you take to resolve the conflict?
   • Did these actions give you feelings of satisfaction, accomplishment, frustration, etc.?

3. Decisional Level Questions/ What can work
   • Did the conflict over the feedlot(s) get resolved?
   • What was the key event/person/technique to getting resolution?
   • Did land use controls (zoning, comp plan, P&Z staff) play a key role? How?
   • What one thing or action that was missing do you think would have made a difference
     in getting the conflict resolved?

4. Supplemental Questions if we have extra time:
   • Was the conflict addressed or discussed privately, publicly, or both?
   • How did the private and public discussion influence each other?
   • Can you describe a conflict in your community that did not involve feedlots and how
     it was resolved?

Questions from Role of Government Team

1. Have you participated in any government decisions related to siting or permitting
   feedlots and what was your experience?

2. How would you have liked to have participated in these decisions?

3. We have listed a number of roles that state or local governments play in the
   authorization of feedlots on the paper passed out to each of you. What concerns do
   you have about how state or local governments’ handle these various responsibilities
   concerning feedlots?

4. What government activities related to feedlots do you think local or state government
   is doing particularly well?
5. What does government need to do better, if anything, with regards to feedlots in the future?

Questions from the Social and Community Impacts Team

General Themes: Do cultural and social interactional characteristics within a community play a role in decision-making and conflict over feedlot issues? What are the qualities of local leadership, local institutions, and local community culture (culture of inclusion, dense community social networks, active public citizenry, distribution of information, norms of collective action, levels of trust)? What has been the level of participation in meetings related to feedlots? Have there been efforts to include others? Have there been town hearings, newspaper reports?

1. How have changes in animal agriculture in your county impacted your community?
   - Have changes in animal agriculture in your county led to changes in your population make-up?
   - Do you have any new population groups settling in your county who work in feedlots?
   - Have changes in animal agriculture in your county led to changes in school composition?
   - Are the new populations bringing families?
   - If so, what are their needs (examples: ESL, housing, social services, etc)?
   - How are these needs being met?

2. What has been the impact of conflict over feedlot issues in your communities?
   - Have changes in animal agriculture in your county led to strained social relations in your churches?
   - What role has the media played in reporting issues related to feedlots?
   - Have conflicts been reported in newspaper?
   - Do you sense that there has been any change in the level of community neighborliness as a result of conflict over animal agriculture in your county?
Semi-structured Format of GEIS Individual Interviews

1. What is your relationship to animal agriculture in your community? (e.g., producer, community activist, feedlot regulator, county commissioner, etc.)

2. If a producer, are you a producer of any of the following?
   - Beef __________ head
   - Swine __________ head
   - Dairy __________ head
   - Chickens __________ head
   - Turkeys __________ head

3. What changes in animal agriculture have you witnessed in your community over the past 10 years?

4. Have changes in animal agriculture led to a difference in the population make-up of your community? (E.G., do you have any new population groups settling in your county who work in animal agriculture?) If yes, explain.

5. Have changes in animal agriculture in your county led to changes in school composition? (Are the new populations bringing families?)
   a. If so, what are their needs? (e.g. ESL, etc)
   b. How is the school system adapting to these new needs?

6. How have other organizations been impacted by the presence of new populations (e.g., social services, churches, community centers, 4-H, etc.)

7. In what other ways have changes in animal agriculture in your county impacted your community?

8. Have you noticed any changes in the way farmers interact with other community members that are related to changes in animal agriculture?

9. Have you noticed changes in social relationships at your local church as a result of changes in animal agriculture?

10. Do you sense any change in community neighborliness as a result of changes in animal agriculture?

11. Would you say there has been controversy or conflict over changes in animal agriculture in your county?

12. Have you ever been directly involved in a conflict over a feedlot?
   a. If yes, how were you involved (or what event caused you to get involved)?
Semi-structured Format of GEIS Individual Interviews (continued)

b. How was the conflict resolved?

c. Was this resolution satisfactory to you?

13. What role has the media played in reporting issues related to animal agriculture?
   a. Have disagreements been reported in newspaper?
   b. Do you feel that the media has reported the issues in an unbiased manner? Explain.

14. Do you think people in your community are willing to entertain a diversity of viewpoints regarding animal agriculture?
   a. What venues are there for people to express their opinions about animal agriculture? (e.g., town meetings, hearings, letters to the editor, etc).
   b. When in a public setting, does everyone get equal time to speak?

15. How have changes in animal agriculture impacted your quality of life?
   a. How have they impacted your family’s quality of life?

16. Disregarding our example of animal agriculture for a moment, but thinking in general terms about your community, how willing would you say are people in your community to accept controversy (e.g., is controversy brought out in the open and discussed or ignored and hidden?)

17. Give me an example where you believe your community has demonstrated a low level of trust in the decision making process on a particular issue.

18. Can you think of one thing or action that would resolve community controversy or conflict regarding animal agriculture? (probe: Is there one key to success that should be incorporated in policy making?)

19. How would you define (geographically) your community? (e.g., who is in your community, or do you define it by county borders, township, etc.)

Are there others who you would like to recommend who might be interested in speaking to me on this issue?

Name

Address/Town

Phone