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RURAL SUBDIVISION:
A Case Study of Farmers' Accounts of Rural Subdivision
in the Selwyn District.

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Resource Studies
at
Lincoln University

by
K.M. Lee

Lincoln University
1999
FRONTISPIECE

Lifestyle Subdivision Advertisement: Rolleston, Selwyn District.
This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Herb, once a farmer in the Selwyn District.
ABSTRACT

Abstract of a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of M.R.S.

RURAL SUBDIVISION:
A CASE STUDY OF FARMERS' ACCOUNTS OF RURAL SUBDIVISION IN THE SELWYN DISTRICT

by K.M. Lee

This thesis investigates how farmers experience and respond to the phenomenon of rural subdivision. The Selwyn District, in Canterbury, New Zealand, is employed as a case study. Forty two farmers participated in qualitative in-depth interviews (a total of 25 farms). The farmers included those presently farming in the District and those who had subdivided or whom were in the process of subdividing their farms. The accounts of the farmers are analysed using the theory of narrative. At an individual level, five different themes are evident in the accounts of the farmers. A second level of analysis reveals patterns across and between the themes. A shared narrative is evident in the accounts of all farmers pertaining to the economic profitability of farming and perceptions of the Selwyn District Council's approach to rural subdivision. However, there exist conflicting narratives over the impacts of rural subdivision, in social terms, upon rural land and upon the activity of farming. Overall, rural subdivision is perceived as a very viable financial option for many farmers in the District. Some implications for farm structure, rural subdivision planning policy and rural resource studies methodology are offered.

Key Words: rural subdivision, Selwyn District, farmer, lifestyle block, lifestyler, Selwyn District Council, experience, response, account, narrative, subdivider, non-subdivider.
I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who have contributed to the completion of this thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Simon Swaffield for his invaluable guidance, interest in the topic, advice and editing comments. I would also like to say thank you to my associate supervisor Dr. John Fairweather for his interest in the topic, critical comment and editing assistance.

Tim Mitchell from the Selwyn District Council played an important role, answering my questions and assisting with selection of interviewees. I am also grateful to other staff of the Selwyn District Council and the Canterbury Regional Council who returned telephone calls, provided information and took part in interviews and discussions.

However, I am especially indebted to the farming families of the Selwyn District that welcomed me into their homes during the very hot summer of 1998 and freely spoke about their experiences of rural subdivision during what was a busy and stressful farming period. It is their accounts of rural subdivision upon which this thesis is based. Many suggested friends, neighbours and acquaintances that could potentially be interviewed as well as providing hospitality. This was gratefully appreciated.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to my parents who have provided encouragement and support during my time at university. I would particularly like to thank my mother for assisting with transport to the interviews, collecting newspaper articles and for her general interest in the thesis topic. Thank you also to my father for stimulating my initial interest in the topic of rural subdivision.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Country and the City

"Although farmland is pretty to look at, farmers and non-farm residents generally do not make good neighbours" (Daniels et al., 1995:131).

Rural and city dwellers have always expressed different values and expectations in relation to the rural environment. When farmers and non-farmers share an environment these differing values and expectations can lead to conflict and this can be heightened during periods of change (Blakie, 1996; Shaw, 1995; Swaffield and Fairweather, 1998; Upton, 1995). The primary aim of this thesis is to understand how farmers experience and respond to changes in the social, economic, natural and physical environment in which they have traditionally farmed. The research focuses upon the issue of rural subdivision using the Selwyn District as a case study.

Rural subdivision is not a new activity. However, like other districts close to the main cities, the Selwyn District, in Canterbury, New Zealand, is currently experiencing particularly high levels of rural subdivision. From mid 1994 to late 1997 the number of lifestyle blocks in Selwyn increased by more than 40 percent (The Plainsman, 1998).

The rural environment has certain characteristics which have always attracted city residents. The countryside is perceived as a haven away from the hustle and bustle of the city, where space and fresh air prevail, where people are friendly, and where crime and pollution are minimal (Daniels 1997; Swaffield and Fairweather, 1998; Yabsley, 1987). Urban dwellers are attracted to the countryside in search of the 'good life' (Bull et al., 1988), where the best of both worlds can be experienced (Yerex, 1988). Rural areas close to cities provide an opportunity for residents to commute to city employment. This is evident in many areas of the developed world (Bull et al., 1988). However, subdivision of rural land for urban commuters raises some issues of concern for traditional farmers. In particular, it brings urban values and expectations into potential conflict with those of rural dwellers. The following quotation exemplifies this concern:

"The increase in rural dwellers seeking lifestyle rather than income does impose costs on farmers. Having moved into the country, the urban dweller often wants to impose urban standards on rural land users. The smell of fertiliser or the sound of bird scarers don't fit with the quaint country atmosphere that the city dwellers imagined they were entering. Rural land users rightly fear the imposition of costly controls to meet the aesthetic sensibilities of newcomers" (Upton, 1995:15).
1.2 A Definition of Rural Subdivision

Essentially, rural subdivision is a process that determines where new lines that demarcate ownership should be drawn on maps (De Luca, 1991). It is through this process that new parcels of land are created with separate certificates of title. This is achieved by dividing existing titles of land and establishing boundaries. The new parcel of land can then be held in different ownership (Selwyn District Council [SDC], 1995; Works Environmental, 1996).

Moran (1997) notes that there are several ways in which the literature uses the term subdivision. Most often, it refers to the creation of smaller parcels of land, each with its own title. Subdivision can be used to define the creation of further farms through existing titles coming on to the market. The term severance is also sometimes used in the North American literature and usually means the severing of a small parcel of land from a larger parcel. In addition, subdivision can be achieved via boundary adjustment (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1997). For example, a farmer may choose to sell off a part of his or her property to a neighbouring farmer. The titles of both properties are adjusted with one title becoming smaller and the other larger. A new title is not created but rather, adjustments are made to existing titles.

Under the Resource Management Act (1991)\(^1\) the definition of subdivision includes the division of an allotment through issuing of separate certificates of title, cross leases, company leases, leases over 20 years and unit titles. No individual is able to subdivide land unless it is allowed by the relevant district plan or if consent has been granted under section 105 of the RMA (SDC, 1995). The inclusion of subdivision within the RMA provides a means of assessing and controlling the potential effects of land subdivision in the public interest. Both rural and urban subdivision are prerequisites to the creation of an interest in land which can then be leased long term or sold. An interest in the land allows the owner to raise capital and develop the land how they wish (Works Environmental, 1996).

In this thesis, the term 'rural subdivision' refers to the break up of farmland into smaller allotments. The allotments that occur through this process are referred to in the literature by numerous titles. These include smallholdings (Fairweather, 1993; Meister and Stewart, 1980), hobby farms (Edwards, 1992), farmlets (Yerex, 1988) and lifestyle blocks (Country Living, 1995). The term 'lifestyle block' is predominantly used for the remainder of this thesis as subdivision for lifestyle purposes is the main phenomenon currently occurring in Selwyn. Where reference in the literature has been made to the above terms they have been interpreted as having the same meaning as a lifestyle block in this thesis. The term 'lifestyleyer' as used in this thesis refers to the people who purchase and live on the holdings created through the process of rural subdivision.

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\(^1\)Henceforth, the RMA or the Act.
1.3 Research Objectives

**Primary Research Objective:**
1) To identify farmer perspectives upon rural subdivision and develop an understanding of farmers' experiences and responses to this phenomenon.

The secondary objectives that follow provide more detailed research questions which will contribute to achieving this broad primary objective.

**Secondary Research Objectives:**
2) To ascertain the reasons that contribute to the subdivision of farmland;
3) To examine the advantages and disadvantages that the occurrence of rural subdivision brings to rural communities and the activity of farming, as expressed by farmers;
4) To identify how farmers perceive lifestylers;
5) To determine farmers' perceptions of rural subdivision policy and to document the present planning approach to rural subdivision.

The term 'farmer' as used here encompasses farmers presently farming in the Selwyn District as well as those that had subdivided their farms or whom were in the process of doing so. The farmers who participated in this research were primarily those that sourced their main income from their farms. However, some part-time farmers have also been included in the participant sample (see Chapter 5). This occurred as these farmers were in the process of subdividing their land and no longer sourced their primary income from the land. One such couple had never sourced their primary income from their farm.

1.4 Significance of the Research

Much of the research to date, Fairweather (1993), Hunt (1995), Jowett (1976), and Moran et al., (1980, a;b;c;d) has focussed upon the people that purchase lifestyle blocks, including to what use the land is put, who these people are and their motivations. Little research exists directly relating to how rural subdivision impacts upon the farmers themselves and their viewpoints of this phenomenon. This thesis begins to address that imbalance. Several authors have recognised that a conflict exists between traditional farmers and non-farm neighbours (Blakie, 1996; Swaffield and Fairweather, 1998). However, this issue has not been developed in-depth. In this study, using a grounded approach, the theory of narrative (Onega and Landa, 1996; Riessman, 1993) is used to interpret the accounts of farming families in the Selwyn District to the phenomenon of rural subdivision.
At a broader level, the research will also contribute knowledge and understanding to the field of rural resource studies. There exists a need for study into how farmers are responding to changes within the agricultural sector as is expressed by the following quotation:

"Far more research is needed on farmers' attitudes and motivations, especially in relation to how and why they are reacting in particular ways to changes in the agricultural industry" (Halliday, 1989 cited in Ilbery, 1991:217).

The evidence that does exist on the responses of farmers to rural subdivision is often reported in the popular press and lacks an empirical or theoretical background. Therefore, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge that exists on rural subdivision in New Zealand and will be particularly significant in addressing the current imbalance which emphasises attitudes of in-comers, by focussing on the existing rural community.

The results are not intended to provide a solution for how rural subdivision policy should be formulated within the Selwyn District, but rather are intended to contribute to a wider understanding of what is happening within the District. However, it will provide information for planning and policy staff of the Selwyn District Council which may be helpful in preparing the new District Plan, as well as providing background information for other staff involved in planning for and about rural subdivision.

The results of the research will also provide useful information to help meet the monitoring requirements of the RMA (1991). Specifically, Part 4, Section 35 of the Act states that local authorities have a duty to gather information, monitor and keep records. They must monitor resource consents that have effect in the region/district, monitor policy statements and plans and the state of the whole or parts of the environment. Within the RMA (1991) the current definition of environment is fairly broad. It includes a) ecosystems, b) natural and physical resources, c) amenity values as well as social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions which affect a, b and c. Therefore, there is scope for information about attitudes to rural subdivision presented in this thesis to support the statutory planning process.

1.5 An Outline of the Research Approach

The research is based on a case study of the Selwyn District. In social science, a case study can be thought of as a microscope (Hakim, 1987). It provides a way of answering the question 'what is going on?' (Bouma, 1997). A case study provides the means to research one or more examples of a social phenomenon, in this instance the attitudes of farmers in the context of subdivision of rural land. Case studies are advantageous in social research as they "Provide a richly detailed 'portrait' of a particular social phenomenon" (Hakim, 1987:6). The thesis adapts a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews to obtain farmers' accounts of rural subdivision in the Selwyn District. This approach was chosen as
it enabled a richness and depth in terms of what farmers were thinking and saying about rural subdivision to be expressed. The accounts were analysed using narrative theory.

There are three key theoretical concepts on which the research is based:

**Experience and Response**
For the purpose of this research experience is interpreted as the personal observations, knowledge and feelings of the farmers affected by rural subdivision. Response is defined as the actions and intentions as a result of changes in the environment in which farmers farm or have farmed. Both the experiences and responses of farmers have been revealed in the accounts obtained from farmers collected from in-depth interviews. (These definitions have been adapted from the Concise Oxford Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 1991)).

**Account**
In this thesis, the term 'account' is used to describe an oral or written explanation of and commentary on an individuals' recent experiences, and responses to these experiences. The term is used here to refer to verbatim accounts (adapted from Gilbert and Abell, 1981; Potter and Wetherell, 1994).

**Narrative**
Narrative is the analytical tool used to interpret the accounts of farmers. Chapter 4 provides a more detailed discussion of this approach. Analysis of the accounts of farmers will show whether there is a shared narrative or narratives among farmers in the Selwyn District.

Figure 1.1 provides an outline of the research approach adopted (see overleaf).

**1.6 Thesis Structure**

Chapter 2 reviews literature pertaining to why rural subdivision occurs, the issues raised by rural subdivision, how planners have dealt with subdivision and how farmers have responded to rural subdivision. A focus is given to the New Zealand experience. Chapter 3 discusses the case study. Specifically, this includes trends occurring within the Selwyn District and rural subdivision policy.

Chapter 4 explains the qualitative research methods used in this research. An emphasis is given to the theory of narrative and how it has been used in this study. The results obtained from interviews with the farming families are presented in Chapter 5. Lastly, Chapter 6 discusses the findings of the results and their meaning in terms of the existence of both shared and conflicting narratives. The implications of the research are explored in terms of farm structure, planning policy on rural subdivision and the methodology of rural resource studies. Topics worthy of future research are suggested.
ARCHIVAL REVIEW
- District plan submissions
- Resource consent submissions
- Newspaper articles
- Selwyn District Council reports

APPROACH
Qualitative
(phenomenological)

RESEARCH METHODS
Archival Review
- District plan submissions
- Resource consent submissions
- Newspaper articles
- Selwyn District Council reports

Primary Research Tool
(In-depth Interviews)
(25 interviews with farming families in the Selwyn District)
(42 persons in total)

Partially Structured Interviews
- Selwyn District Council
- Canterbury Regional Council

AN ACCOUNT
(Revealing farmer experiences and responses to rural subdivision)

ANALYSIS
- Construction of narrative(s)
- Interpretation of narrative(s)

RESULT
Both a shared and conflicting narrative of rural subdivision is expressed by Selwyn District farmers:

a) A shared narrative of farming economics and appropriate rural subdivision policy;

b) A conflicting narrative in relation to social impacts and consequences for farming activity and rural land.
CHAPTER 2:  
ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH RURAL SUBDIVISION IN NEW ZEALAND

2.1 Chapter Outline

Having clarified the research objectives and summarised the key research concepts it is now necessary to review the literature on rural subdivision. Much of the literature reviewed in this chapter is predominantly based on the New Zealand experience. This is largely because subdivision of rural land in New Zealand is quite unique compared to that which occurs in other parts of the world such as Europe and the United States of America. For example, in Britain and other parts of Europe, planning legislation limits the building of new homes on agricultural land. Those wishing to live in a rural environment therefore only have the option of purchasing existing dwellings in farming communities or residing in high density mini-estates near existing settlements. The situation is also further differentiated by the fact the land surrounding the main centres in New Zealand, is often more reasonably priced compared to that in North America and Europe (Swaffield and Fairweather, 1998).

This chapter briefly describes the history of rural subdivision in New Zealand, the factors contributing to the demand for small rural blocks and the reasons that influence farmers to subdivide their farms. Arising from this are a number of issues: economic, environmental and social. These are discussed and emphasis is given to rural planning in New Zealand, particularly the Town and Country Planning Act (1977) and the Resource Management Act (1991). Lastly, discussion occurs regarding farmers' responses to the issue of rural subdivision.

2.2 A History of Rural Subdivision in New Zealand

Subdivision of farmland in New Zealand is not a new activity. Land settlement has been an important component of its European history (Moran, 1997), and the development of agriculture has been a significant reason for its subdivision (Evans, 1981). The land constituting the country of New Zealand was originally held by Maori. Much was purchased by the Crown in the 19th century or confiscated. Conflict has existed between Europeans and Maori over occupation, ownership and management of land in the past and it continues in many areas today. It is not appropriate to discuss the history of European and Maori relations in detail here, although the reader is encouraged to refer to Cumberland (1981), Evison (1997) or Rice (1992). However, it is notable that in the case study area, the Crown and Ngai Tahu have recently reached an agreed settlement of long standing.
grievances arising from the initial land purchases (Barnao, 1998). Further discussion of this matter is provided in Chapter 3.

Many of the European settlers that came to New Zealand desired to farm their own land. This was particularly so for the immigrants that came from the rural areas of Britain during the 1870s. However, there were difficulties in achieving this dream. A pattern of land ownership developed in New Zealand whereby much of the land was controlled by large scale pastoralists (Department of Statistics, 1990). Concern arose over the aggregation of holdings. The Government of the day implemented a policy aimed at dividing large estates and enabling closer settlement. From 1892 until 1911, the Government offered 3.4 million hectares of land for sale, eventually broken into 33,000 holdings for settlement (Department of Statistics, 1990).

With the depression during the 1930s and the resulting high unemployment, the Government began to develop remaining unsettled Crown lands. During 1932-33, a Small Farm Board was established, its main goal being the development of unimproved and deteriorated land for settlement by the unemployed. In 1941, the Land Settlement Board gave preference to providing ex-servicemen Crown land or land which had been purchased by the Crown from private owners (Plunkett, 1971). In 1961 the Government removed the restriction of making land for settlement available to only ex-servicemen (Department of Statistics, 1990). Today the development of land is not an activity of the Government, although it did continue until the 1980s via the Land Corporation. Along with settlement of the land, there has existed an almost Jeffersonian-like commitment to providing farms for families (Moran, 1997).

The phenomenon of subdividing farmland into smallholdings has been an important occurrence in most New Zealand counties, dating from the 19th century (Evans, 1981). However, in more recent years it has significantly increased in scale. Subdivision of land on the fringe of cities including Christchurch and Auckland became widespread during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was during this period that smallholding multiplied rapidly (Lawn et al., 1979). Following changes in the New Zealand farming sector¹, the number of lifestyle blocks sold on the freehold open market increased dramatically. During 1985, 39,793 lifestyle blocks were sold in New Zealand. By 1996 this figure had more than doubled to 90,178 (Valuation, NZ, cited in Fairweather, 1997). That there exists considerable demand for lifestyle blocks, particularly within commuting distance of cities

¹ Significant changes occurred within the New Zealand farming sector following the election of the Fourth Labour Government during 1984. The agricultural sector was deregulated. The main changes included: the instigation of a floating exchange rate, reduced tariffs and import licences, removal of internal economic regulations, removal of restrictions on the flow of currency and new taxation provisions (Le Heron et al., 1992).
is not disputed. It is therefore necessary to consider the reasons that contribute to this demand.

2.3 A Demand for Lifestyle Blocks

"For many the countryside is one of the last frontiers of individuality and freedom, where the lucky few can still make eccentric decisions far removed from the restrictions and bureaucratic frustrations of urban life" (Blacksell and Gilg, 1981:24).

A rural environment has a variety of attractions. These include open space, a naturalness, a rural atmosphere, few neighbours and the opportunity to develop a direct relationship with nature. The city and the advantages that it provides is still often very accessible (Yerex, 1988). There exists numerous reasons explaining why people purchase lifestyle blocks. These include the desire to own a place of residence in a rural area, or a residential site with pasture to support a few animals or the wish to farm part-time. Some individuals may also purchase good quality land that can be farmed, eventually planning to make it their primary income source (Simmons, 1991).

Considerable research has been conducted in New Zealand, regarding the reasons that attract people to rural areas. Meister and Knighton (1984) found in their survey of 205 smallholdings in the Wairarapa, that the main reason for country living was the wish to live in an environment that was rural. Raising children in a rural environment was also considered to be important, while the price of the property influenced whether or not it was purchased. The motive to develop a farming or horticultural enterprise was also significant. It is interesting to note that ten percent of the people who took part in the research viewed their smallholdings as a 'stepping-stone' unit toward bigger and better things.

Similarly, O'Connell's (1986) study of smallholding in the peri-urban fringe of Christchurch, found that more than half of his sample population considered a rural environment to be a better place to live than in the city. A large proportion of the smallholders fell into the child-rearing stage of life. It was also found that smallholders tend to be relatively affluent as a whole, with many employed in high socio-economic occupations.

More recent research conducted by Fairweather (1993) focussed upon the perceptions of intending smallholders and existing smallholders of the rural lifestyle around Christchurch. The research involved qualitative interviews with a sample of 58 people on 33 smallholdings. The interviews were supplemented with Q-sort data obtained from a list of 33 statements about urban and rural attitudes. Results found that the main goal of intending smallholders was to generate income, whether it be retirement income, extra income, to diversify income, achieve self employment or self sufficiency. The majority continued to
work in the city to help establish their block of land. They also wished to experience a rural lifestyle with the privacy its open spaces provided.

The main goal of existing smallholders was country living, including the open space, lack of neighbours, relaxed living and piece and quiet. Nearly all of these smallholders stated that their perceptions had not changed since becoming smallholders. Horticulture and horses were the main uses to which the land was put. The majority continued their paid employment away from the property. In general terms, the level of satisfaction with the rural lifestyle by existing smallholders was high. Of note was that no families were actually planning to return to the city, but were looking for either a larger or smaller property.

An important finding of participants in the existing smallholding group occurred when asked the question whether or not lifestyle or land use was important when they began smallholding. Of the 13 existing smallholder families, there were seven cases of lifestyle first, two cases of land use first and four cases of both. By 1993, this result had changed. There were eight cases of lifestyle first, no cases of land use first and five cases of both. This meant that land use was no longer as important as it was during initial purchase (Fairweather, 1996). That is, lifestyle becomes more important than land use once smallholders realise the reality of farming.

2.4 The Supply of Land for Rural Subdivision

The demand for lifestyle blocks influences the supply of land available for lifestyle subdivision. Both demand and supply are interconnected. If no demand existed for lifestyle blocks, farmers would not subdivide their farms, while if no blocks were available there would most probably exist no demand. The discussion that follows considers the factors that lead to subdivision of farmland.

The proximity of farmland to urban areas significantly influences its use. Remote areas tend not to be faced with the same pressures as the urban fringe (Blacksell and Gilg, 1981). Rural areas that have the fastest growth rates tend to be those in the rural-urban fringe. Both rural and urban land uses occur in the rural-urban fringe. It is in the rural-urban fringe that the city and farm meet (Rogers et al., 1988). In New Zealand, the land under greater pressure for rural subdivision is that which is near to urban areas or close to coastal areas (De Luca, 1991).

A report prepared by Works Environmental during 1996, provides a useful summary of the factors contributing to subdivision of farmland. One of the main reasons is that subdivision provides a means for farmers to reduce their debt level. Farmers involved in employment away from their farms to improve their incomes may find that they no longer have the time to devote to running their farm. A farmer may choose to subdivide their farm in an area where land values are high and use the money gained to purchase a larger farm in an area
where land is less expensive. They may wish to subdivide simply to make a capital gain. Also, rates may rise as the value of land rises. This means that the costs of farming increase, encouraging subdivision. Existing farmers may also be encouraged to subdivide based upon envisaged farming difficulties occurring through the subdivision of nearby farms (Works Environmental, 1996).

Declining farm revenues may encourage farmers to subdivide, increasing the supply of blocks on the market. Further, if the price of rural land becomes too high it may become too expensive to undertake traditional farming activities such as sheep and cattle production given the potential income that can be received. Some farmers may subdivide, alter the titles of their farm but continue to retain the land in their ownership. The report suggests that this activity may be undertaken with the anticipation of subdivision rules becoming stricter. Subdividing on paper provides the farmer with the flexibility to subdivide at a later date as the farm is now held in numerous titles.

The stage of life of the farmer may influence whether or not a decision to subdivide is made. They may intend to retain it, retire on a part of it, or sell the land passing the money on to family members. As farmers increase in age it is generally found that their equity in property increases. This therefore means that there is greater flexibility to change farming programmes while retaining farm profitability (Works Environmental 1996).

A further piece of research conducted by Talbot (1996) of rural subdivision in the Western Bay of Plenty, found the main reason for landowners choosing to subdivide was financial, namely to reduce debt. Other reasons included: the ability to sell land at some time in the future, family reasons, the size of the allotment and its suitability for the activities of the owner. However, such reasons were ranked considerably lower than financial reasons. Talbot's earlier 1994 study also found results that were very similar, with financial considerations ranking as the primary reasons for undertaking subdivision (Talbot, 1996).

2.5 The Issues Raised by Rural Subdivision

Subdivision of farmland in rural areas raises economic, social and environmental issues. It is important to emphasise here, that whether or not something is perceived as a positive or negative impact of rural subdivision depends upon the perspective of the viewer. In line with the RMA (1991), it is not the act of rural subdivision per se that leads to potential environmental effects, but rather the activities that occur on the land after subdivision occurs (Shaw, 1995; Upton, 1995; Works Environmental, 1996). With the buying and selling of land for lifestyle block subdivision it is likely that some form of impact will inevitably occur, whether it be positive or negative or in some situations both.

One important economic issue relates to production levels. A review of the New Zealand literature reveals that alteration to production levels achieved from farmland following
subdivision is a consistent issue of concern (Bradley, 1980; De Luca, 1991; Hunt, 1995; Lawn et al., 1979, Meister and Knighton, 1984; Meister and Stewart, 1980; Moran; et al., 1980d). It is often expected that when a traditional pastoral farm is divided into smaller blocks and sold, production levels will automatically fall. An early study (Perkins, 1976), although now somewhat out of date, examined production changes resulting from the subdivision of a 275.2 hectare farm into 44 blocks of varying sizes. The study concluded that production fell significantly after subdivision. However, no substantial conclusions can be drawn from this research as the study involved only one farm. Perkins (1976) also suggested for any weighting to be given to this finding, there existed a need to research a larger area, over a more substantial period of time. This suggestion was in fact taken up by the Paparua County Council. The same farm was surveyed as well as a random survey of 130 small blocks from throughout the County (Lawn et al., 1979). Production trends were analysed for a nine year period for the farm used in Perkin's (1976) study. It was concluded that initially production did fall and then began to increase steadily. Overall, it was found that production was at least equal to and probably higher after subdivision of the farm. For the random survey, it was found that the general production level achieved on a per hectare basis, was either average or above average (Lawn et al., 1979).

In general, most research points to an increase in the production attained from the land following subdivision compared to that previously achieved while in operation as a traditional farm. For example, Mears (1974) found a significant loss in production did not occur with the advent of part-time farming, while on land farmers may have viewed as having low potential production, production may actually increase. This viewpoint is also supported by other studies such as Meister and Knighton (1984) who found the break up of farmland into small blocks did not lead to a fall in agricultural production, but instead a slight increase occurred. With the occurrence of rural subdivision a greater diversity of activities occurred on the land.

A study of 308 properties in the Western Bay of Plenty found that total production value derived from the land rose by three percent following subdivision (cited in Peacocke, 1997). It is important to note here that half of the 308 properties were producing less after subdivision occurred. These results appear to indicate that if lifestyle blocks are considered individually, subdivision may result in the land being used in a less productive manner, but production levels rise when the blocks are considered together. This finding is also reinforced by O'Connell (1986) who found that on an individual basis not all smallholdings are used in a productive manner. However, if the production achieved from the smallholdings is considered as a whole, it seems production increases. A more recent study by Veltman (1994), undertaken in the Horowhenua District, concluded that the establishment of lifestyle blocks led to an 18 million dollar opportunity cost in terms of lost production to the District.
Another economic issue relates to land values. The creation of lifestyle blocks and often significant investment of capital pushes up land values of the surrounding area, leading to an increase in rates for those farming (Blakie, 1996; Edwards, 1992; Meister and Stewart, 1980). This may mean a farmer wishing to purchase more land finds it expensive. On the other hand, it does provide an opportunity for the farmer to sell his or her land at a much higher price (Lundy, 1996). Urban dwellers often have a greater ability and willingness to pay for land in rural areas than those living or farming in such areas. This disadvantages rural people when competing for land. In America, for example, Lapping et al. (1989) note that city dwellers moving into rural areas tend to be wealthier than locals. As a result, land prices have risen significantly.

A number of social issues follow from subdivision. Rural subdivision places pressures upon the farming activities of existing farmers. This occurs as prior urban residents find original expectations of the rural environment such as fresh air, peace and open space do not always occur in the countryside. Thus, many find traditional farming practises contrast with their expectations of the countryside (Blakie, 1996; Shaw, 1995; Upton, 1995). The activity of farming produces certain outputs which can be annoying or simply irritating to non-farm neighbours. Examples include dust, odour, noise, spray drift and slow moving machinery (Daniels, et al., 1995).

Henshall Momsen (1984) in reference to the Canadian experience notes that subdivision of farmland can often lead to social conflict. Davidson (1984) suggests that such conflict is often heightened by the fact that the new residents, in most instances, do not have an agricultural background, hold different values and do not support the institutions and communities of the environment into which they have moved. North American research on farming in peri-urban areas points to an increase in vandalism and trespassing (Grigg, 1984; Pacione, 1984), disturbance by dogs of grazing animals, particularly sheep (Daniels, 1997; Grigg, 1984), an increase in traffic (Henshall Momsen, 1984) and a general increase in complaints from non-farming neighbours (Daniels 1997; Daniels, et al. 1995; Pacione, 1984). In New Zealand, examples include the leaking of fertilisers into neighbouring water tanks, livestock on roadways holding up traffic and creating dirty vehicles, while pet dogs of lifestyles can be a nuisance to livestock farmers (Lundy, 1996). The following quotation exemplifies what farmers seem to think about the movement of non-farm residents into their communities "Farmers rarely agree on most issues, but there appears to be consensus in the farming community that the fewer neighbours, the better!" (Daniels, 1997:132).

Environmentally, rural subdivision alters the landscape. Establishment of dwellings and associated plantings modify the visual landscape (O'Connell, 1986). The rural character can be lost as blocks of land become smaller and the number of houses and neighbours rise. The area becomes more urban and therefore less like what people move to the country for in the first place (Upton, 1995). The flow of traffic also increases with the occurrence of
rural subdivision. A study conducted by Talbot (1996) in the Western Bay of Plenty found that an increase in the volume of traffic movements and the pressures that this placed upon the roading network was viewed as a significant impact.

Despite the aforementioned disadvantages potentially occurring through rural subdivision, nevertheless, advantages are also evident. From an environmental perspective, lifestyle block owners tend not to place the same pressure on the environment that livestock farmers do. The run-off of animal effluent and fertiliser is significantly reduced (Upton, 1995). Also, lifestylers frequently undertake measures which help conserve the soil. For instance, the planting of trees and hedgerows (Hunt, 1995).

Rural subdivision can bring benefits to rural communities through greater demand for services and facilities, in turn benefiting everyone. For instance, Talbot (1996) found in his study of rural subdivision that an increase in the activity of local businesses was perceived as the most significant positive impact. A further advantage was an increase in school roles (although more people in Talbot's study perceived this as a disadvantage than an advantage).

There exists some debate relating to the level of community involvement of lifestyle block residents. Meister and Knighton (1984) concluded in their study that such newcomers appeared to be actively involved in community activities. The research further concluded that lifestylers mixed with the communities into which they move, contributing to community life, boosting local services and introducing social diversity. However, this finding does conflict with other evidence. The comments of a farmer reported in a newspaper article suggest this may not be true (The Plainsman, 1998). The farmer considered the urban habits of many lifestylers brought minimal benefit to the local community. Lifestylers worked, spent their money, and educated their children in the city and it was in fact in his opinion, farmers that provided the business for local garages, transport companies and the veterinarian. Earlier research found that those purchasing small blocks of land often continued to retain previous city connections (Moran et al., 1980b) and tended to socialise according to occupation and prior interests (Lawn et al., 1979). This is also reported in some recent research. Swaffield and Fairweather (1998) concluded that New Zealand lifestylers were not looking for a place in a pre-existing rural community. Such results suggest there is some disagreement regarding the benefits resulting from movement of lifestylers into rural communities.

2.6 Planning and Rural Subdivision

The section that follows discusses how some of the issues occurring through rural subdivision have been dealt with both in the past and today.
"In the general sense of the word, planning is forward thinking or the making of advance arrangements, usually in the light of experience, for known or anticipated needs" (Reekie, 1975:1).

Planning enables us to understand where we are now and what must be carried out now and in the future to achieve our goals (Lichfield and Darin-Drabkin, 1980). Through planning, potentially costly or embarrassing mistakes may be avoided (Daniels et al., 1995). Planning involves intervention by law, incentive or other means with natural outcomes (Gilg, 1978).

The open market is generally regarded as an effective means for maximising utility, assigning ownership and determining how land should be used (Spaling and Wood, 1998). However, the open market is often criticised for failing to take into account public values such as health, safety and welfare. Rural planning can assist in allocation of rural land and resources among competing uses and guide the market towards socially desirable results. At the same time, the role of private entrepreneurs in rural economies can also be recognised (Lapping et al., 1989).

New Zealand rural planning can be categorised as a relatively recent phenomenon (Moran, 1989). Planning approaches adopted in New Zealand were directly imported from Britain. Urban planning dominated much of the planning that took place in New Zealand until the Town and Country Planning Act (1953) was introduced (O'Connor, 1993). This was also evident in the United States of America where planning in rural areas was initially based on urban philosophies. Plans had little relationship to the rural resources, local realities and community needs. Planning today in the rural areas of America is more comprehensive, focussing upon rural needs and the rural community, rather than just as an area for perceived urban expansion (Lapping et al., 1989).

Up until the late 1970s New Zealand rural planning was largely based on zoning (Moran, 1989). With the introduction of the Town and Country Planning Act (1953), an important piece of legislation influencing rural subdivision, many of the district schemes basically just applied urban planning concepts to the built components of rural areas. Few policies were implemented that were directly rural. The 1953 Act was intended "To ensure as far as possible the preservation of land of high value for food production" (O'Connor, 1993:139). However, it was found to be rather difficult to implement ways of achieving this goal. A provision made to ensure the 'wise use' was also found to be too difficult to apply (O'Connor, 1993). The Act was updated by the Town and Country Planning Act of 1973 and later by a further version during 1977 (Moran, 1989).

The Town and Country Planning Act (1977) instructed local authorities to plan for:

"... the wise use and management of the resources, and the direction and control of development, of a region, district, or area in such a way as will most effectively
promote and safeguard the health, safety, convenience, and the economic, cultural, social and general welfare of the people, and the amenities, of every part of the region, district, or area” (Town and Country Planning Act, 1977:531).

Section three of the Act (matters of national importance) set up specific provisions to be provided for in regional and district schemes of relevance to rural subdivision. They are as follows:

(d) The avoidance of encroachment of urban development on, and the protection of, land having a high actual or potential value for the production of food;

(e) The prevention of sporadic subdivision and urban development in rural areas;

(f) The avoidance of unnecessary expansion of urban areas into rural areas in or adjoining cities (Town and Country Planning Act, 1977:531).

These provisions, first introduced during 1973 were intended to control subdivision of farms into smaller blocks, particularly those occurring in areas surrounding urban centres. Minimal discussion occurred over its inclusion as it was assumed small blocks formulated from subdivision of prior pastoral farms, of high quality land were undesirable. Predominant views at the time failed to consider potential production that could be obtained from horticultural units (Moran, 1989).

Two important planning tools dominated much of the rural subdivision that occurred under the Town and Country Planning Act (1977). They were the minimum lot size and the economic unit and warrant further discussion here. The minimum lot size became known as the 'ten acre block'. This terminology endures in many rural areas today. The ten acre block syndrome resulted in problems. It did not recognise the variability of soils and neglected to define ‘economic’ (Upton, 1995). However, the ten acre block has become a part of New Zealand language, denoting farmland too small to be viable commercially as a farming unit while not as intensively managed as a commercial horticultural unit. The ten acre block generally came to be thought of as rural land owned mainly to provide a desirable lifestyle (Yerex, 1988).

The minimum lot size tool was characterised by its inflexibility. This lead to wayward and unintended outcomes that rarely achieved the intended results. Although this approach limited the development levels it failed to address the effects resulting from rural subdivision. For instance, discharges into groundwater, landscape alterations and the services required in areas where rural subdivision was occurring. According to Upton (1995) this approach was not fully thought about and wasted a large amount of land by coercing people to purchase ten acres that really only required one or two. It also meant that provision of services by local authorities was rather costly due to the resulting low
density populations. Policy allowing smaller lifestyle blocks would have meant services could be concentrated in specific areas.

The second tool, the economic unit was instigated to allow greater flexibility in the control of rural subdivision. However, it too resulted in problems. An industry developed for farm and horticultural consultants. The primary task of such consultants was to concoct uses for individuals trying to convince local authorities they should have the right to build upon their land. Upton (1995) explained the problem with this approach was control could only be placed upon what people were not allowed to do, not what they would do. If an individual wished to avoid such controls they could purchase a previously developed block.

The Resource Management Act (1991) replaced the Town and Country Planning Act (1977) along with a large number of other environmental statutes (Banks, 1992). Sustainable management of natural and physical resources is the primary purpose of the Act. The Act focuses upon regulating the effects of activities on the environment, rather than the activities themselves (Le Heron and Pawson 1996; Memon, 1993). Compared to the Town and Country Planning Act (1977), the RMA (1991) is much less prescriptive and provides greater flexibility in terms of how land can be used. Basically people can do what they wish with their piece of land, providing the effects do not contravene what is stated in the relevant plan. It regulates the effects of human activities on the environment rather than prescribing the activities that can and cannot occur (Memon, 1993).

Under the RMA (1991), rural subdivision is controlled for the purpose of sustainable management (SDC, 1995). The Act provides an opportunity for local authorities to implement policies and controls that meet the needs of their particular districts. It also ensures that authorities can cover servicing and other downstream costs resulting from rural subdivision from the actual subdivider (De Luca, 1991).

Despite the intention of the RMA to create a more flexible approach to land use, many local authorities have continued to implement prescriptive zoning and subdivision controls that were favoured under the prior Town and Country Planning Act (Grundy, 1995; Nixon, 1997). Interestingly, a review of district plans from throughout New Zealand found that many of the new plans prepared under the RMA have continued to treat protection of soil productivity as an important issue. The rationale for such policy relating mainly to a desire the land is retained primarily for agriculture (Works Environmental, 1996).

At the time of writing, the RMA (1991) is under review. Almost eight years after instigation of the Act, there exists criticism relating to whether restrictions over land use have been reduced and an emphasis upon environmental effects as was the intention of the Act. The McShane Report (McShane, 1998) questions whether subdivision should even be included in the Act. After all, as noted previously, the altering of lines on a map (Shaw,
1995) does not create an environmental effect, but rather, this occurs through the subsequent activity upon the land. Prior to the RMA, subdivision was included in a separate act. However, Salmon (1998) suggests that if councils were not able to control subdivision by statute their ability to both manage and protect the environment would be reduced considerably. The outcomes of the review at this stage are not clear but it is likely that amendments will be made to the RMA (Ministry for the Environment [MfE], 1998).

As discussed previously, the main purpose of the RMA (1991) is to ensure the sustainable management of the environment. Its powers extend only to ensuring the effects of activities do not contravene this. Existing activities in general have continued, providing they have not contravened the policy of the relevant district plan (RMA, 1991: Part 3, Section 10). This means that most farming practises have remained, unless new council by-laws have been instigated or the farmer has applied for resource consent to undertake a new activity. Councils do not have the power to regulate farming activities, for example, the hours in which farm machinery should be used. However, some councils have livestock droving by-laws and fire permits, while some industries such as the pig industry are self regulating encouraging buffer zones (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998).

In America, the nuisance doctrine has been instigated, allowing legal action against any use which affects surrounding land through the discharge of odour, light, heat, dust, vibration, or glare. However, this nuisance litigation has not been hugely successful and continues to remain controversial (Daniels, et al., 1995). All states in America have in fact instigated 'right-to-farm' laws. Such laws provide protection for the farmer from lawsuits that claim farmers are causing a nuisance (Alterman, 1997). Despite such legal protection, it has not prevented non-farm neighbours from complaining about farm activities and many farmers are still taken to court (Daniels, 1997). It is now necessary to discuss the matter of what farmers actually think about rural subdivision.

2.7 Farmer Perceptions of Rural Subdivision

Much of the literature suggests that rural people are different from urban people. In particular, the social and political attitudes of rural people tend to differ from those that live in urban areas. Lapping et al. (1989) suggest that rural people are conservative and resistant to change and progressive ideas. Cloke (1986) also supports the idea that rural people are conservative, particularly in political terms. Rural people also differ from urban people in their relationship to the land. The literature reveals that farmers value highly the productive capacity of their land. "A farmer does not simply enjoy looking at the land or thinking about investing money in buying up more land; he [sic] requires land to make things grow" (Sanders, 1977:11). The productive potential of the land is important as it is from this that the farmer derives his or her income.
Moran (1989) has termed the concern by farmers over the productive capacity of land the pastoral farming ethic. He argues that its existence led to an uncritical acceptance of policy constraining the occurrence of rural subdivision in New Zealand. Rural smallholdings created through rural subdivision were generally perceived as undesirable, largely, because of a perceived loss in production from the land. This was particularly evident during the 1970s as pastoralists held office in many county councils (Country Living, 1989).

A variety of other factors also influence the attitudes of farmers to change. Such factors include, age and education, whether a farmer owns or rents the farm, desired income and risk each individual is willing to take. Also, the size of the farm, availability and cost of finance, level and stability of government aid and price support, the taxation rate and the likelihood of the farm remaining in the family on the farmer's retirement. It can therefore be argued that farmers exert considerable influence in land use change in rural areas (Blacksell and Gilg, 1981).

A review of the literature reveals that little information exists upon perceptions of farmers to rural subdivision other than the odd piece of anecdotal evidence. Such evidence tends to be based on the opinions of one or two farmers, therefore the significance that can be assigned to such opinions is questionable. How the average farmer perceives rural subdivision is also notably lacking from the considerable body of research occurring on this issue from the late 1970s through to the 1990s.

One study provides some insight into the matter. An attitude survey of rural subdivision was undertaken in the Western Bay of Plenty during both 1994 and 1996 (Talbot, 1996). Three groups were included in the survey. The subdividers (those who had subdivided their farms), the buyers of subdivided blocks, and the existing community (those living in rural areas that are not subdividers or buyers). The research involved a telephone survey. The most significant finding was all three of the groups in the 1996 survey stated that rural subdivision had an impact on either the individual or the local community (this was true for 73.5 percent of the total sample). Twenty nine percent of impacts were considered to be positive, while 69 percent were viewed as negative. This meant that the three sample groups saw the negative impacts of rural subdivision to be greater than the positive impacts of rural subdivision. The impacts perceived as the most significant negative impacts were those related to an increase in population, an increase in volume of traffic movements and increasing pressures on the existing roading system. The most positive impact recognised was an increase in the level of business activity.

The 1994 study provided similar results. However, the 1996 survey participants recognised a greater range and number of impacts arising from rural subdivision than participants in the 1994 study. Since the 1994 survey, both the existing community and the buyer groups had increased the level of impacts they perceived rural subdivision brought (12 and eight percent respectively). The group that was classed as the actual subdividers continued to
remain at the same percentage for the level of impacts they considered to occur (Talbot, 1996).

A review of the anecdotal evidence suggests some animosity toward the occurrence of subdivision in rural areas. Some examples are provided via the following quotations:

"You can't blame farmers who eventually say it's [farming] not worth it and give up" (Lundy, 1996:25).

"That's some of the most productive land that we've got and here we are swallowing it up with two horses, three sheep and a cattle beast" (The Plainsman, 1998:13).

"In my opinion, four hectare blocks are a waste of time. They're good for 12 months but then you have to give up all your other hobbies, like golf, because the land takes up too much time. The land then becomes messy and unproductive" (Berkett, cited in Dairy Exporter, 1996:28).

A farmer near Upper Hutt remarked that he would rather see unproductive land used for lifestyle blocks as opposed to fertile land, as indicated by the following comment:

"We understand that people want to get out of the metropolitan areas but feel there's a lot of scope for rural residential on the rather unproductive land" (Lundy, 1996:25).

2.8 Chapter Summary

The above responses from farmers raise significant questions about how farmers perceive rural subdivision and the movement of urban dwellers into their communities. This chapter has shown that subdivision has occurred in the rural environment. The movement of non-farm people into traditional farming areas raises numerous issues, particularly social issues, due to different expectations of the shared environment. In the next chapter, the example of Selwyn District is explored. Focus is given to policy changes occurring within the District, the increase in level of subdivision that has occurred in recent times and how farmers have responded to this.
CHAPTER 3:
THE SELWYN DISTRICT

3.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter explains the context for the case study. It begins by describing the creation of the Selwyn District Council\(^1\) and the characteristics and history of the District. The occurrence of rural subdivision in the District is discussed. Particular reference is given to policy changes occurring within the District, and contemporary subdivision issues are highlighted.

3.2 The Creation of the Selwyn District Council

Local government restructuring during 1989 led to the creation of district and regional councils (Banks, 1992). As a result, 14 city councils, 60 district councils, 13 regional councils and one unitary authority were established\(^2\) (Memon, 1993). Each authority has specific areas of responsibility. Regional councils are involved in water, soil, geothermal resource and pollution control issues as well as sharing management of coastal areas with central government. District councils have responsibility for land use management and control of noise (Memon, 1993; Statistics NZ, 1998). Such councils have authority to prepare policy explaining what people can and can not do, as well as establishing limits within which activities are required to operate (Agriculture NZ, 1997).

The Selwyn District is one of the districts resulting from the changes. It replaces the prior Paparua, Ellesmere and Malvern Counties (SDC, 1995). Selwyn is one of 11 districts falling into the region administered by the Canterbury Regional Council\(^3\) (CRC, 1998). Regional councils are obligated to prepare policy statements which provide a framework for formulation of district plans (Memon, 1993). Each district is required to prepare a district plan, the main purpose of which is to assist its council in undertaking its functions to achieve the purpose of the RMA (SDC, 1995).

3.3 The Characteristics of the Selwyn District

Selwyn District is located to the west of the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. Approximately 649,200 hectares of land constitutes the District. Plains and foothills

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\(^1\) The Selwyn District Council is also referred to as the SDC and the Council in this thesis.

\(^2\) Following amendments to the 1989 reform legislation during 1992, three further unitary authorities were created and some boundaries adjusted. This means there are now 15 city councils, 58 district councils as well as the Chatham Islands Council. However, there still remain 74 territorial authorities in total (Statistics NZ, 1998).

\(^3\) The Canterbury Regional Council is also referred to as the CRC in this thesis.
account for about 54 percent of the land in the District with the remaining land consisting of the Port Hills and high country, generally of slope greater than 15 degrees. The rural area of the District, consists of 419,592 hectares of land and is largely utilised for farming purposes. The Selwyn District has proved to be very suited to agriculture due to its soil, access to irrigation, climate, proximity to an urban centre, markets and transportation (SDC, 1995). Plate 3.1 provides an example of the landscape of the District. Of note, are the 'patchwork' of paddocks that make up the Canterbury Plains, the braided Rakaia river to the left of the photograph and the Southern Alps in the background.

Plate 3.1: The Canterbury Plains, looking towards Torlesse Range
(Source: SDC, 1995)

The five main townships in terms of permanent population in the District are Burnham, Darfield, Leeston, Lincoln and Rolleston. The total urban population of the District is 12,040, while the total population of its rural areas is 12,665 (SDC, 1997). This is illustrated in Figure 3.1 (see overleaf). Figure 3.1 shows that the Selwyn District is divided into a number of rural areas. The Lincoln-Prebbleton Ward has the highest permanent population, followed by the Ellesmere and Malvern Wards. It must be noted that the figures include both the urban and rural populations of these wards.

3.4 A History of the Selwyn District

Human settlement in the Selwyn District dates back to a period in which Moa roamed the once forested plains of Canterbury (Penney, 1979). Polynesians are thought to have landed
Figure 3.1: Population of the Selwyn District

POPULATION
March 1996 Census final population counts from Statistics New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Rural Area</th>
<th>Total Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthurs Pass</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>12,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnham</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalgate</td>
<td>215</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darfield</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doyleson</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunsandel</td>
<td>338</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenmuir</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hororata</td>
<td>234</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirwee</td>
<td>455</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeston</td>
<td>1,232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>2,273</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prebbleton</td>
<td>598</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolleston</td>
<td>1,473</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southbridge</td>
<td>674</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td>201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springston</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Tapu</td>
<td>313</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Melton</td>
<td>202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitecliffs</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Township: SDC, 1997:6)
in New Zealand at least a thousand years ago, although there does exist some debate over the exact time of arrival (Biggs, 1996; Sinclair, 1991). They led an itinerant lifestyle moving around the countryside. However, settlements became more permanent as their population increased, as has been revealed by a variety of archaeological evidence (Penney, 1979). Considerable evidence has been found of later Maori occupation in the Selwyn District, particularly around the foreshore of Lake Ellesmere, a prominent feature in the District (Graham and Chapple, 1965; Penney, 1979). Such evidence is thought to be of at least several hundred years ago (Graham and Chapple, 1965). There were several phases of Maori settlement in the South Island of New Zealand before European arrival. Southern New Zealand has been occupied by a number of tribes including, Waitaha, and prior to that, the Rapuwai and Hawea Tribes. During the 16th century, warlike tribes from the North Island were attracted to the region for its resources of greenstone and food. Ngai Tahu, currently hold status as Tangata Whenua (Evison, 1997). The Selwyn District was of significance to Maori for numerous reasons including settlement and occupation, for its food gathering places, and routes through to the West Coast. Today, it continues to retain practical and symbolic significance for these purposes (SDC, 1995).

The name 'Selwyn' originates from Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, the first and only Bishop of New Zealand. During 1844, Selwyn was guided around the coast and plains of Canterbury by a party of local Maori (Graham and Chapple, 1965; Penney, 1979; Riley, 1995). He is reported to have covered the South Island at least twice and in doing so walking about 5,000 miles. The Selwyn River and the current District name are enduring reminders of his role (Walker, 1997).

European settlement in the area dates back to 1848 (Taylor, not dated). At this time, a large area of land, 13,551,400 acres was purchased in the South Island for the New Zealand Government. The purchase is known as Kemp's Purchase (Ngai Tahu Negotiating Group, 1997). As mentioned in Chapter 2, significant discontent exists relating to the manner in which the land was acquired and the resultant broken promises (see Cant, 1998; Evison, 1997; Evison, 1994). The Crown has recently reached a settlement with Ngai Tahu as a result of the passing of the Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Bill (Barnao, 1998). However, aspects of this settlement are still disputed, by representatives of the earlier Waitaha people (Keene, 1998). European settlers arrived in the Selwyn District and began farming the Canterbury Plains during the 1850s. A significant proportion of land in the District was divided into large runholdings that were purchased or leased by the wealthy immigrants. The new settlers undertook extensive pastoral farming in the high country and intensive pastoral and agricultural farming on the plains of the region (SDC, 1995).

Agriculture has continued to play a significant part in the more recent European history of the Selwyn District. Service towns are spread throughout the District, for example, Springfield, Kirwee and Darfield, developed primarily to service the needs of the surrounding rural areas and farming communities. A pictorial history of the District is
provided in 'Selwyn From The Hills To The Sea', a production of the Ellesmere Camera Club. The publication presents a colourful past of the people, buildings, events and activities that have shaped the past and present of what is known today as the Selwyn District. Photographs and stories are provided of the many townships of the District, both historical and recent. A variety of photographs are included of farming activities in earlier times such as harvesting, ploughing, sheep dipping and farm machinery, thus reflecting the contribution of farming to the District (Ellesmere Camera Club, 1997).

Today, sheep, cattle and arable farming are the predominant land uses in Selwyn. Dairy farming on the plains of the District has become a notable trend in recent years. 'Light' soils, traditionally thought of as unsuitable for dairy farming have with irrigation proved to be well suited to dairying. Numerous vineyards have also been established upon areas of lighter land (SDC, 1995). The rural plains of the Selwyn District are thought to hold between five and ten percent of New Zealand's elite soil. This soil is considered to be elite for its productivity and versatility. The elite soils, mainly Templeton, Hatfield and Waimakariri are located to the east of the plains south of Leeston and north of Springston (SDC, 1995).

3.5 Land Use Trends in the Selwyn District

Subdivision of farmland into lifestyle and horticultural blocks has become a notable activity in the Selwyn District. A further trend that has developed is the subdivision of horticultural blocks into smaller blocks growing specialised crops. This means a substantial number of farms in the Selwyn District are under ten hectares in size, particularly in the areas surrounding Christchurch City. The level of subdivision decreases the further the land is located from Christchurch (SDC, 1995).

The map of the Selwyn District in Figure 3.2 (overleaf), illustrates the land parcels that constitute the District. The map shows parcels falling into three categories: a) between zero and ten hectares; b) between ten and 40 hectares; and c) greater than 40 hectares. Large concentrations of small blocks of up to ten hectares occur in areas such as Lincoln, Prebbleton, Rolleston, Springston, Tai Tapu and West Melton. The areas where concentrations of such smaller blocks have occurred tend to be within commuting distance of Christchurch City (although not indicated on the map, it lies to the north-east of Prebbleton). The outlying regions of the District are where the larger farms predominate.

The Selwyn District is currently experiencing one of the fastest rates of population growth in New Zealand. This rapid growth contrasts with the growth pattern of the District over the preceding 20 years which was characterised by very moderate annual increases. The growth of Christchurch City and increase in demand for lifestyle blocks within commuting distance of the city have influenced this trend. Consequently, the population increased by about 3,500 people (16.2 percent) between 1991 and 1996. The increase during this five
figure 3.2: Land Parcels by Area (Ha) in the Selwyn District
year period is equal to the increase for the whole prior 20 years. It is anticipated that the population of the Selwyn District will continue to grow and it is predicted that by the year 2016 its population will be over 45,000 (SDC, 1997).

Figures reported in the annual report prepared for the Selwyn District Council by Valuation New Zealand indicate that for the 1996-1997 period, the Selwyn District is ranked as first in New Zealand in terms of the level of subdivision growth (both urban and rural) compared to other regions. The District of Waimakariri located on the fringe of Christchurch City also ranked quite highly in terms of subdivision at number four (Valuation NZ, 1997).

3.6 Present Rural Subdivision Policy

The three district schemes presently guiding planning decisions include the Ellesmere County District Scheme, operative on January 1st 1982, the Paparua County District Scheme operative on July 1st 1985 and the Malvern County District Scheme operative on August 6th 1990 (SDC, 1995). The three prior District Schemes were prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act (1977). This meant that some of the policy within these schemes were somewhat out of date. They have since been updated to reflect current planning issues (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998).

Following the implementation of the RMA (1991), the Selwyn District Council commenced preparation of a new, integrated plan, which was published in draft in 1995 (SDC, 1995). However, in an unprecedented move, the Proposed Selwyn District Plan was officially withdrawn on the 22nd of August, 1997 (The Ellesmere Echo, 1997). Due to the upheaval created through the plan's withdrawal, a degree of uncertainty therefore exists regarding rural subdivision policy. As the Plan was in the process of being redrafted and consultation with residents was occurring at the time this thesis was written much of the discussion that follows is therefore based upon interviews with resource planners at both the Selwyn District Council and Canterbury Regional Council.

The withdrawal of the Proposed Plan occurred for several reasons. At least 1500 people and organisations put forward submissions on a wide range of issues within the Plan. The submissions requested that 17,000 changes be made to the Plan. Although the necessary alterations could be undertaken, they would be rather time consuming. The issues raised by the submitters needed to be expressed in legal terms to be useable. This required a process known as a variation which consists of drafting, notification, calling for submissions and hearings. This process can take considerable time. However, by retracting the Plan the information gained from the submitters could be used without having to go through the variation process. Concern also existed over the Plan's content. With growth in the District and changing resource management issues it now means that there are further alternatives that require consideration in the Plan (Plains Express, 1997).
The Selwyn District Council, therefore, decided a more appropriate use of ratepayers' money, Council resources and the energies of the people of the District was to prepare a new Plan. The submissions received on the abolished Plan form the basis of consultation for the preparation of the new District Plan. This meant the work already undertaken on the Proposed Plan could be used as a starting point for the new Plan (The Ellesmere Echo, 1997).

The abolished Proposed Selwyn District Plan included a section on subdivision, reflecting its importance as an issue within the District. The Plan utilised the tool of zoning. Such a tool establishes specific zones in which only certain activities are permissible (SDC, 1995). As the Plan is no longer valid the proposed individual policies relating to rural subdivision are not significant for this discussion. However, a large number of submissions were received on the Proposed Plan in reference to rural subdivision which provide useful insight (SDC, 1996). Many farmers felt that the minimum subdivision allotment size of 40 hectares given in the the Plan, for the main productive rural zones, was too large. In light of this concern, the Transitional District Plan has been amended and the minimum subdivision size altered to a smaller 20 hectares in such rural zones (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998).

At present the general focus for rural subdivision policy recognises that there are certain environments within the District that are more suited to particular activities than others. The rural environment is suitable for agricultural and horticultural activities while the townships are suited to residential and light commercial activities. It is intended that areas surrounding townships of the District will be allocated for lifestyle blocks. The Council is aiming to move away from the current policy which allows location of lifestyle blocks away from townships in the middle of major production zones due to potential difficulties they raise (discussed later in this chapter) (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998).

The Council is aiming to redirect subdivision back towards the existing townships. This means properties can be connected with existing sewer and water schemes. From the point of view of the Council, it is far better to provide specific areas for sewage treatment, rather than scattered septic tanks. Environmental effects are therefore more likely to be concentrated in such areas. It also reduces the likelihood of conflict between differing land uses. For example, pig and poultry farms tend not to be located around the boundaries of townships (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1997).

The Council also plans to ensure lifestyle blocks sizes do not become too small. A large block size provides far greater opportunities to utilise the land. As blocks become smaller there are less potential land use options available to the present or future owner. A large block enables dwellings to be located in the middle of the property rather than close to the boundary of another. This creates a buffer zone, therefore, helping to alleviate the occurrence of conflict between neighbours (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1997).
A minimum allotment size for rural subdivision at this stage is not established. Further investigation by Council staff into this matter is necessary. It may well be that implementation of a minimum size is not necessary. For example, "You could set up a set of criteria which didn't have a specific minimum allotment size that was based purely on effects." It was noted that there was still quite an amount of research to be undertaken on this matter (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998).

3.7 The New District Plan

It is intended that the majority of draft sections of the District Plan will be distributed early in 1999. Chapters of the Plan are to be released individually allowing for comment by the public (SDC, 1998). The completion date for the new District Plan is expected to be late during 1999 or early in the year 2000 (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998).

At the time of writing, consultation was occurring with residents of the District. This took the form of inventory sheets which were posted to residents asking for their opinions on where growth in the townships should be focussed. The inventory sheets were developed based upon submissions received on the abolished Proposed District Plan and submissions received on the Council's Draft Strategic Plan (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998). A good response rate was received in terms of the inventory sheets which are presently being analysed (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998). Further to this, groups of residents are to be formed once information from the inventory sheets is received. Specifically, the groups will focus upon the development options available in their areas and plan where growth should be directed. It is intended that participants will consist of interested members of the public who have put their names forward (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998).

Under the new Plan a lot of the District will be rezoned. Most likely this will include rezoning of land around existing townships for both residential land and lifestyle blocks. "A lot of rural residential zones in the middle of nowhere will be converted back to rural" (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998). It is very probable that criteria for subdivision will become more restrictive as opposed to relaxed. However, the eventual outcome is very much dependent on the consultation currently occurring. The general approach to rural subdivision by the Council is summed up via the following remark:

"Our aim is to make it more strict and really to get small scale development around the townships rather than cutting up a lot of good land because it's needed for farming" (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998).

4 At the time of writing, the draft sections have not been released.
3.8 Rural Subdivision Issues and the Canterbury Regional Council

The Proposed Regional Policy Statement of the Canterbury Regional Council guides the formation of district plans within Canterbury's boundaries (CRC, 1998). A number of issues relating to the activity of rural subdivision are of significance to the Canterbury Regional Council. Particularly the effects of rural subdivision upon soil, flooding, septic tanks, transport and energy.

Subdivision of rural farmland can effect versatile soils. The Policy Statement defines versatile soil as Class 1 and 2 land under the Land Use Capability Classification System. This accounts for about six and a half percent of the region. Versatile soil has a number of important characteristics. It can support a wide range of productive uses with a low level of resources when compared with other soils. Its production potential is considered to be superior and is regarded as a scarce regional and national resource (CRC, 1998). The Proposed Regional Policy Statement states that future irreversible uses of versatile land should be avoided as far as possible to prevent excluding options for productive use. Small losses of Class 1 and 2 land can therefore be quite significant (CRC, 1998).

Canterbury has about 290,000 hectares of Class 1 and 2 land therefore it is not likely that the region will ever run out of such land. However, within New Zealand as a whole there is not much of this type of resource. In soil terms, versatile land is one of New Zealand's top resources (McCallum, L. pers. comm., 1998). The issue of versatile soils is not such a dominant issue under the RMA as it was under previous legislation "Nevertheless our Council still thinks it's an important issue. Versatile land is not something that should just be squandered" (McCallum, L. pers. comm., 1998).

A further issue of significance within the Selwyn District is flooding. This places restrictions upon where houses can and can not be built. Some areas within the District are very prone to flooding, particularly near Lake Ellesmere and along the lower Selwyn River.

Septic tank issues are also of importance, particularly if allotment sizes fall below four hectares. Public health issues, effluent plumes downstream and impacts upon groundwater can occur. Most district councils within the Canterbury region agree that in clustered areas of development it is necessary for servicing by reticulated sewage disposal and water schemes. This is particularly so if there are a number of septic tanks nearby. However, there are areas within the Selwyn District such as Darfield and Kirwee where groundwater depth is very great. Therefore, there is not the same need to reticulate services in such areas (McCallum, L. pers. comm., 1998).

Transport and energy effects resulting from rural subdivision are also significant. If sprawl occurs in the Selwyn District from Christchurch City, much of the development that occurs is likely to be motorcar orientated. The Regional Policy Statement presents policies aimed
at minimising vehicle trip distances, emissions and energy use (CRC 1998). The transport and energy issue is currently topical within Christchurch City but also has linkages within the Selwyn District if people continue to move to the District. The transport issue is starting to overshadow all other issues (McCallum, L. pers. comm., 1998).

The relative seriousness of the above potential impacts resulting from rural subdivision is dependent upon the future scale of subdivision as portrayed by the following comment:

"A few of them there and here's not going to cause any problems, but if there's going to be hundreds and thousands of hectares of it, if that's where a significant part of Christchurch's urban growth is going to go then it will start to have serious impacts. It will change quite radically, the rural character of those areas for the local people that live out there at the moment" (McCallum, L. pers. comm., 1998).

3.9 The Issues Rural Subdivision Raises in the Selwyn District

Rural subdivision has brought advantages to the Selwyn District. An increasing population provides a greater ratings base. Further rates provide greater funding available for Council projects such as improvement of sewage disposal and water schemes, roading, libraries and other infrastructure:

"Essentially it is a money orientated activity, purely there's no other reason for it, the more people you encourage to the District, the more monies you have for various projects" (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998).

Such activity provides advantages to the Selwyn District rate payers. The 1997-98 period had a nil general rate increase. This has occurred because although general rate requirements increased they remained the same for each property as growth in the number of properties provided the extra general rate revenue (Selwyn Herald, 1997). The rates officer for the Selwyn District Council explained that over the last four years rates have remained the same. With more people contributing to the total rate fund there has not been the need for a rise in rates (Cummings, S. pers. comm., 1998).

Rural subdivision has provided the opportunity for individuals to establish viable and innovative businesses on small blocks of land as well as the opportunity to lead a semi-rural lifestyle. In some areas it has provided more shelter which can lessen the likelihood of wind erosion (McCallum, L. pers. comm., 1998).

However, it has raised a number of difficulties. One of the big issues is cross boundary conflict. "There is considerable cross boundary conflict between those that appreciate what the rural environment is about and those who watch Maggie Barry's garden show and have the idea that it is supposed to be quiet after ten o'clock at night and that there are no cows or cow droppings on the road." (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998). As blocks
become smaller, the likelihood of conflict is heightened by the fact that houses are closer together. Also, with decreasing allotment size it is less likely that amalgamation with another title will occur in the future. According to a planner at the Council, the number of applications to amalgamate allotments is probably only one percent of the total resource consent applications (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998).

The subdivision of farmland also raises demands upon the Council for further and improved infrastructure and services in areas not currently serviced. For example, sealed roads and rubbish collection. The creation of new subdivision creates pressures upon existing infrastructure. Examples include roads, sewage disposal systems, water reticulation systems and rubbish removal (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1997).

It is apparent that a conflict exists in the Selwyn District between farmers and people residing near farms. It is quite common for Council staff to receive at least two complaint telephone calls over farming practises per day. This is particularly so during the warmer months with complaints expressed over stubble burning, the noise created by bird-scarers and farm machinery, spray-drift, odour produced by animals and fertilisers, and generally any activity that creates noise or odour (Edwards, C. pers. comm., 1998). The public of the District appear to have the perception that if they wish to complain about the activity of a neighbour, that it can be dealt with by contacting the District Council. However, there are three clear levels of distinction between civil law, council law and the RMA (1991). The Council's powers extend only to the RMA and the District Plan. Within the RMA there exists for example, no restrictions pertaining to the hours in which tractors should be driven (Mitchell, T. pers. comm., 1998). Thus, the Council does not have the mandate to deal with such complaints.

A widely publicised example of conflict is that between a dairy farmer, John McDrury and lifestyle block owners in Tai Tapu located in the Selwyn District. The issue has been in existence for over five years and relates to the management of cow effluent along the Old Tai Tapu Road. It provides an example of the differing values that exist between farmers and lifestylers. It is necessary for Mr McDrury to drove his herd of around 350 cows between his split properties along the road twice daily. This activity has annoyed the lifestylers due to the cow effluent left upon the road and the disturbance to the verges of lifestyle properties (Gee, 1998).

There have been numerous attempts to alleviate the problem. These have included attempts by Mr McDrury to subdivide his farm (Doornenbal, 1998), cleaning of the road by the Council (Mair, 1998a), proposals to erect a laneway (The Central Canterbury News, 1998) and talk of prosecution (Mair, 1998a). At present it seems Mr McDrury may be granted permission to subdivide his property. However, no final decision has been given (The Press, 1998). The following quotation exemplifies what appears to be the problem from Mr McDrury's perspective:
"My family has lived in the Halswell area since the 1930s when there were only farming families in the District. Now we have lifestylers who have little or no empathy with farmers or traditional farming activities" (Mair, 1998b:4).

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has shown that a significant level of subdivision has occurred in the Selwyn District in recent times. The retraction of the Proposed District Plan means that there exists a degree of uncertainty with regard to rural subdivision policy. Conflict does exist between new residents and some farmers. The next chapter discusses the research methods that will be used to determine whether such conflict is characteristic of the wider Selwyn farming community.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 Chapter Outline

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methods adopted in undertaking and analysing the research. The chapter begins by explaining the conceptual approach which guides the research methods adopted. A framework that derives from the theory of narrative is used to analyse the accounts of Selwyn District farmers and is briefly explored. The research method is explicitly recounted and details of analysis are provided. This is followed by discussion of the limitations of the research approach.

4.2 Conceptual Approach

Phenomenology provides the main basis of this research. Phenomenology can be thought of as thinking about the relationship between people and the world (Seamon and Mugerauer, 1985). The main objective of phenomenology is "The direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions" (Spiegelberg, 1975 cited in Johnston, 1986:62). Phenomena can be explained as the meanings given to items in the individual's lifeworld. The focus of phenomenology is understanding human action through the study of meanings allocated to phenomena (Johnston, 1986). In this study, the meanings given to the phenomenon of rural subdivision by farmers.

The research also draws upon an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is characterised by immersion in the field by the researcher to obtain data, primarily by interviewing and participant observation (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). Fetterman (1989) considers interviews to be the most significant information gathering tool available to the ethnographer. The ethnographic interview contextualises what the interviewee may have experienced or viewed.

Ethnographic research is typically phenomenologically based. A phenomenological approach recognises that there exists more than one reality and is inductive. Thus, the researcher tends to enter the research field with few assumptions (Fetterman, 1989). Such an approach is closely linked to grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is characterised by its exploratory nature, attempting to obtain understanding and develop theories rather than testing predetermined theories (cited in Minichiello et al., 1990). This thesis is based on a grounded phenomenological and ethnographic approach.
4.3 Theoretical Framework

4.3.1 The Theory of Narrative

The theory of narrative (Onega and Landa, 1996; Riessman, 1993) provides the basis for interpretation of the responses and experiences of farmers to the phenomenon of rural subdivision in the Selwyn District. It provides a way of making sense of what farmers have said about rural subdivision. The theory of narrative came into popularity from the 1970s onwards. It has been utilised in research undertaken in a wide range of disciplines (Barthes, 1977). Some examples include philosophy, history, anthropology, linguistics, psychology and sociolinguistics (Cortazzi, 1993). It has been argued that narrative plays a central part in our lives:

"... narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative" (Barthes, 1977:79).

Barthes (1977), elaborates further stating that narrative is transhistorical, transcultural and international. It exists like life itself. From this perspective, narrative is the principal form through which human experience is made meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narratives are a fundamental part of our cultural and social environment. We both give and receive narratives. Examples of the giving of narratives include the creation of narrative descriptions for ourselves and others about our own past actions, and we develop storied accounts that give sense to the behaviour of others. Examples of receiving narratives include the stories we receive through conversations and the written and visual media (O'Neill, 1994).

A narrative has several characteristics. In its most basic form a narrative can be thought of as having a plot, a beginning, a middle, and an end. It relates events in a temporal, causal sequence. Every narrative describes a sequence of events that have happened (Denzin, 1989). Narrative exists in a diversity of forms (Barthes, 1977; Kreiswirth, 1995). Some examples include stories in newspapers and magazines, short stories written by novelists, stories people tell one another about themselves in everyday life and stories people tell about other people (Denzin, 1989).

Several authors, Onega and Landa (1996) and Polkinghorne (1988) suggest that there exists a degree of ambiguity in defining narrative. The ambiguity exists largely between whether or not it is the end product that is the narrative or whether it refers more to the actual process of telling the narrative. Narrative as used in this thesis is defined as the accounts of farmers expressed during in-depth interviews.
Events that occur in the real world are seldom narrative. Rather, they become narratives through the processes of coding and decoding. For example, if a burglary occurs, it is not a narrative as it takes place. However, if it is reconstructed, it can become a narrative of what may have been a random and unrelated event. Most likely, this would be undertaken for an audience, whether the audience is yourself or a number of other individuals (O'Neill, 1994).

4.3.2 The Advantages of Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is predominantly used in qualitative research and is of more use in studying small sample sizes as opposed to larger samples (Riessman, 1993). A narrative analysis "... allows for systematic study of personal experience and meaning: how events have been constructed by active subjects" (Riessman, 1993:70). Narrative analysis investigates a subject's own account of a phenomenon, and why the account was presented in that way? (Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysis is useful in this study as:

"It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for the understanding of the actions of others" (MacIntyre, 1981 cited in Kreiswirth, 1995:66).

The theory of narrative thus provides a means of making sense and assigning meaning to farmers' experiences and responses to rural subdivision in the Selwyn District. How then can a narrative be obtained? This topic of enquiry is discussed in the research method that follows. More specific detail of how the farmers' accounts will be analysed to determine the existence of narrative is provided in section 4.4.5.

4.4 Research Methods

4.4.1 A Qualitative Approach

The research data were gathered using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to discover the nature of phenomena as humanly experienced. This is achieved by ascertaining the thoughts, perceptions and feelings of people. In undertaking qualitative research the researcher is able to find out how people give meaning to and organise their lives (Minichiello, et al., 1990).

The primary research tool was a qualitative in-depth interview. Such an approach enabled farmers of the Selwyn District to express their accounts of the phenomenon of rural subdivision. As Cortazzi (1993) puts it:

"By studying oral accounts of personal experience we can examine the tellers' representations and explanations of experience" (Cortazzi, 1993:2).
The following comment explains the essence of the in-depth interview:

"In-depth interviewing is conversation with a specific purpose a conversation between researcher and informant focussing on the informant's perception of self, life and experience, and expressed in his or her own words. It is the means by which the researcher can gain access to, and subsequently understand, the private interpretations of social reality that individuals hold. This is made public in the interview process" (Minichiello et al., 1990:87).

The accounts gathered for this research have been obtained from qualitative in-depth interviews. Interviews differ from traditional narratives such as novels or life histories. "In qualitative interviews, typically most of the talk is not narrative, but question-and-answer exchanges, arguments, and other forms of discourse" (Riessman, 1993:3). The narratives expressed in in-depth interview are seldom clearly bounded, for instance starting with 'once upon a time'. Discovering the narratives embedded in interviews is therefore a process of interpretation (Riessman, 1993). The accounts of farmers in the Selwyn District provide evidence of their experiences and responses to the phenomenon of rural subdivision. Farmers' accounts tell us about their way of perceiving and thinking. Narrative analysis is one way to interpret this. Narrative analysis can be thought of "As opening a window on the mind, or, if we are analysing narratives of a specific group of tellers, as opening a window on their culture" (Cortazzi, 1993:2).

4.4.2 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken during December of 1997. This proved useful as discussed by Sarantakos (1993) to determine weaknesses, inadequacies, ambiguities and problems that could potentially occur during the fieldwork phase. Such an approach ensured any problems could be addressed prior to the main interviews. Several farming families known to the author were asked to take part in the pilot. The pilot study enabled the practising of the interview technique, testing of the interview guide and testing of whether or not it was best to interview farming couples separately or together. It was found that most partners tended to hold similar views and their ideas tended to 'bounce off' one another. Due to time constraints, it proved convenient to interview partners together. No significant problems occurred during the pilot study and it proved a useful means of determining how people would respond to the interview guide. Several further topics arose that were able to be included in the later interviews. As the pilot study was a success, the interview transcripts obtained were able to form a part of the data analysed in this thesis.

4.4.3 The Participants

A request was made to a Selwyn District Council planner for a list of names of both farmers who had subdivided and those farmers living in the district, presently farming (at least 40 names). This information is stored in a computerised database at the Council. A
total of 30 resource consent applications for subdivision of rural land was obtained from the database. This information contained details of the subdivision proposal, the location, applicant names, the type of resource consent applied for and whether or not subdivision permission had been granted. The resource consent data dated from 1994 to 1997. Also obtained from the Council were the names of individuals who had put forward submissions on a recent controversial subdivision application. It proved too difficult a task to locate the names of farmers not subdividing from the database. Although they may have owned land in the District, it did not necessarily mean they were farming. The planner suggested driving around the District and looking for the names of farmers on mailboxes in areas where rural subdivision was occurring. Clues that might be useful to determine whether or not someone was a farmer might include grazing stock, farm machinery or a town milk supply sign.

However, such an approach was not necessary. Snowball sampling proved to be more than adequate. Snowball sampling is a referral technique, whereby participants are asked to suggest other individuals whom may be helpful to the study at hand (Babbie, 1995; Singleton et al., 1993). This type of sampling begins with a few participants that are available to the researcher who are asked to recommend other people who meet the criteria of the research who might wish to take part. This process is continued until no more potential participants are discovered or the researcher feels they have all the information that they require (Sarantakos, 1993). Thus, it involved asking those farmers who had subdivided the names of other farmers, particularly those continuing to farm, who they thought might be interested in taking part. As the fieldwork progressed, participants were specifically asked whether they knew of farmers in certain areas of the District or farmers involved in specific agricultural activities to ensure a wide variety of viewpoints were included. Of note was the fact that the farmers had been recommended by other farmers often meant they felt obliged to participate as their friend or neighbour had taken part. Only one individual recommended in this manner declined to take part.

A telephone call was made to prospective participants inviting their participation in the research. The nature of the research was explained, what their input would involve and how the information would be used. Confidentiality was assured. It was also necessary at this stage to determine whether or not prospective participants were in fact farmers. Five farmers declined to take part in the research providing reasons such as it was a contentious issue that they would rather not take part in, that they were busy or quite simply because they would rather not. One farming family in the process of subdividing their property declined to participate for health reasons. A further two farmers were particularly busy at the time and soon to go on holiday, but did suggest they could be reapproached at a later date. This was not necessary. A further farmer commented that he was busy, and felt that he could not provide any further information at an interview than what could be given over the telephone. Discussion occurred for about ten minutes over the telephone and some useful comments were provided in relation to his experiences and observations of rural
subdivision. Telephone calls were conducted during the lunch hour and evenings as this was found to be the most likely time that farmers would be at home. The act of telephoning farming families and establishing appointments proved to be quite time consuming.

4.4.4 The In-depth Interview

The fieldwork phase of the research took place over the months of January and February 1998. Two interviews were also undertaken in early March. In total, 25 interviews of farming families from throughout the Selwyn District occurred. The majority of the interviews involved farming couples. In some instances it proved rather difficult to arrange a time to suit both partners, or one partner had to cancel at the last minute or because the individual did not have a partner. This means that the viewpoints of 43 people were included in the research. Results from one telephone interview are also included in this total. Such a number was deemed adequate as in-depth interviews are known to produce a large amount of rich material very quickly. It also ensured the data obtained remained at a manageable level given the author's own time constraints. As discussed by Lofland and Lofland (1995:89) "The researcher legitimately sacrifices breadth for depth."

The farmers farmed and lived or had subdivided land in a variety of areas. These included Broadfield, Brookside, Darfield, Dunsandel, Greendale, Greenpark, Irwell, Ladbrooks, Leeston, Lincoln, Motukarara, Rolleston, Sandy Knolls, Springston, Tai Tapu and West Melton. A farm location map of the Selwyn District (Ellesmere Jaycee, 1988) proved very useful in locating the homes of the interviewees.

All interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants. Generally, the interview began with some introductions and small talk, leading onto explanation of the research. Each participating couple or individual was provided with a letter explaining the nature of the research and a consent form (refer to Appendix 1). In some instances the letter was sent in advance of the interview by mail, particularly in the case where the interview had been arranged for some days later. However, in instances where the interview was arranged almost immediately or within the next few days, the letter was taken in person and presented at the interview to avoid postage delays.

An interview guide was prepared (refer to Appendix 2) providing potential topics to be covered at the interview and ensured a degree of flexibility. This meant interviewees could speak on their own terms about a set of topics and whatever else they considered to be relevant and useful. Such an approach means that if interviewees raise issues earlier than anticipated, they can be discussed then and there. It is not necessary to follow the format of the interview guide but rather pursue the particular issue when it is topical to the subject. Lofland and Lofland (1995) consider that an interview can therefore be thought of as a guided conversation.
The topics included in the interview guide covered farm and personal details aimed at placing the participants at ease. Most people enjoyed talking about their families and farms. Generally this discussion occurred first, leading onto conversation about rural subdivision. However, in several instances those farmers in the process of subdivision were particularly keen to tell their experiences and viewpoints upon rural subdivision almost immediately. Further topics were brought into discussion for those individuals who were subdividing their land or had subdivided (see Appendix 2).

Leading questions were avoided as it was important to discover the viewpoints of the interviewees, rather than those of the author. It was sometimes necessary to make use of probes (Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Minichiello, et al., 1990) to aid thinking in relation to matters interviewees neglected to raise. For example, "some of the farmers already interviewed have mentioned ... how do you feel about this?"

Most interviews averaged about an hour and a half in length. Several took two hours, while some were a half hour long. The majority of the interviews occurred during the evenings, however, some were able to be carried out during the day time. This was particularly so in the case of dairy farmers that had completed the morning's milking, farmers that employed staff to operate their farms or whom were subdividing and not running the farm as a fully fledged economic unit. Permission was obtained at the beginning of each interview to use a tape recorder. Most people agreed to this, although several were a little hesitant, perhaps because it was a new experience and some might argue as somewhat unnatural. One farming couple supplemented their interview by driving the author through an area of lifestyle blocks situated in close proximity to their farm. This provided a useful context for the remainder of the interview as the subdivision formed the basis of many of their observations and experiences of rural subdivision.

**4.4.5 Analysis of the In-depth Interviews**

Each interview was transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview. Although the transcription of tapes can often be very time consuming, completing it oneself is very beneficial to the analysis process. Listening to the tape bit by bit triggers ideas that can be noted which will be useful for analysis and can later be built upon (Lofland and Lofland, 1995).

A research journal was recorded during the fieldwork phase of the research. This proved very useful in terms of maintaining a record of who had agreed to participate or asked to be contacted at a later date. Also, any initial comments given about rural subdivision were noted. A summary of each interview was prepared at the completion of each transcription. This included the main points of the interview, areas of interest for later follow up and quotations that might prove useful in later analysis. Also included were general feelings.
about the success of the interviews. It later proved to be useful in the analysis and write up of the research.

There exists a multitude of approaches to the undertaking of narrative analysis (Onega and Landa, 1996). Examples include: textual production; structure; plot; and relationships between actions and characters. It can however be approached in other ways including: stylistically; archetypally; historically; deconstructively; and thematically (Onega and Landa, 1996).

A thematic approach to the analysis of the farmers' accounts has been adopted (Onega and Landa, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988). Such an approach involves the drawing out of themes that are evident in the accounts of the farmers. A narrative(s) is then constructed based upon the themes revealed in the accounts. This was achieved through a process of reading and re-reading the accounts of the farmers searching for patterns and contradictions. It enables a more general analysis to be undertaken rather than searching for specific linguistic devices which in this instance would not be so relevant to the topic.

Each interview transcript was photocopied and coded according to the various issues that arose from the interviews. The interview transcripts was read a number of times to gain an understanding of what farmers were thinking and saying. This occurred both during and after the fieldwork had been completed. In reading the transcripts, manual searches were made for general patterns in the accounts of the farmers as well as variations that did not appear to fit. To aid analysis, a chart was prepared summarising the key issues of each in-depth interview and reference made to any potentially useful quotations. The chart provided an overall 'picture' of the accounts of all of the farmers and proved to be a useful means of comparing and contrasting the farmers' narratives. From the chart, reference could then be made to the relevant interview transcription for greater detail. In preparing the chart, it became apparent that a number of common themes had emerged in the accounts of the farmers (see Chapter 5).

**4.5 Other Research Methods**

Archival searches were also conducted of submissions on the proposed Selwyn District Plan (particularly submissions on rural subdivision policy), articles in local newspapers, and submissions on several subdivision proposals. This data was useful to compare and contrast with the information received from the interviews.

Four partially structured interviews (Singleton et al., 1993) also occurred with two planners from the Selwyn District Council and one from the Canterbury Regional Council. The information obtained provided knowledge of rural subdivision issues within the Selwyn District and valuable understanding of the Council's policies.
4.6 Limitations of the Research Methods

One limitation of the design used in this study of farmer experiences and responses to rural subdivision in the Selwyn District is that there was some difficulty in obtaining willing participants. Several factors could well have contributed to the initial difficulty in obtaining participants. The summer months are a particularly busy period for farming families with harvesting, hay making, shearing, irrigation and many other farming activities. Therefore, it is highly likely that this may have influenced the decision of some farmers that declined to participate. Also, some farming families were soon to go on holiday, however, in most cases this was able to be accommodated.

A further factor that may have contributed to difficulty obtaining willing participants was the drought present in Canterbury at the time the interviews took place. The drought of 1998 was at its peak during the interview period and a climatic extreme compared to what is usually experienced in the area (Owens, 1998). This meant that many farmers were under pressure with irrigation or lack of it, shortage of feed and the general heat of the weather. It is therefore likely that some farmers were feeling stressed with the hot weather. In fact, it was reported that the seriousness of the drought conditions in Canterbury had led to a level of depression by the farming community who could see no end to the long dry summer (The Central Canterbury News, 1998).

The use of qualitative in-depth interviews as the main research method placed a limitation on the number of farmers that could potentially participate. A quantitative approach, perhaps a questionnaire would have enabled a much greater number of farmers to take part. However, as this research aimed to understand farmer experiences and responses to rural subdivision it was more appropriate to employ a method that would enable a richness in terms of meaning to be obtained. Resource and time constraints also limited the extent to which farmers in the Selwyn District could be interviewed. However, the fact that the majority of the interviews involved two subjects, saved valuable time and increased the number of participants included in the sample. The use of a narrative analysis is also more easily applied to a small sample.

The participant sample was obtained through snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling procedure. Such an approach produces some degree of bias as it includes mainly participants on a 'who knows who' basis. The approach tends to exclude other farmers living in the District who are not acquainted with any of the participating farmers. However, due to difficulty in obtaining willing participants this type of sampling was the most appropriate approach.

As noted previously, most of the interviews included two subjects. Often the male interviewee was more vocal than female interviewee, although not always the case. In several instances it was the females that dominated the discussion. This occurrence was
most probably due to the fact that the majority of the farms included in the study, were primarily farmed by the male partner. It is therefore perhaps more likely they would have more to say on the matter of rural subdivision due to their everyday farming activity. In situations where this occurred, attempts were made to include the female subject by asking if she had anything further to add to the matter in question.

In recognition that variables such as farm 'type' and proximity of the farmers to areas of rural subdivision might influence their viewpoints, attempts were made to alleviate this. These included ensuring participation by farmers that were involved in a variety of agricultural pursuits and those that lived in different areas within the District. Some bias may have occurred as the large majority of the farming couples that participated fell into the over 40 years of age bracket. However, little could be undertaken to avoid this occurrence. Rather, it was a matter of obtaining consent from any farmer that was agreeable to take part in an interview.

Although a case study approach was used, the results may have broader applicability beyond the Selwyn District alone. The patterns which were evident in the accounts of many of the farmers, particularly those relating to structural matters (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) suggest that farmers in other areas of New Zealand experiencing rural subdivision activity would quite likely hold similar viewpoints.

As with any social research, there is always a degree of subjectivity due to the researchers' experiences and beliefs and the use they intend of the data gained. This was overcome by remaining as objective as possible, while the use of open-ended questioning ensured the subjects were able to make their own views known.

**4.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explained the research methods adopted in this thesis. The theory of narrative has been discussed and details of how it has been used to interpret the accounts of farmers. The next chapter discusses the results obtained from the in-depth interviews.
CHAPTER 5:
THE FARMERS' ACCOUNTS

5.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter presents the results obtained from interviews with farmers in the Selwyn District. The chapter is largely descriptive, although some analysis occurs at a basic level. This occurs through the structuring of the chapter according to a number of themes evident in the accounts of the farmers. The five themes presented are: the economics of agriculture, Selwyn District Council policy, soil and production, the advantages and disadvantages of rural subdivision and perceptions of lifestylers. The viewpoints of farmers are described and quotations provided from the accounts of the farmers. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the farms and farm families that were involved in the study. This is followed by more specific discussion of the likelihood of the farmers presently farming subdividing and the subdivision reasons that were expressed by the subdividing farmers. This provides a context to aid understanding and interpretation of the farmers' experiences and responses to the phenomenon of rural subdivision. The five themes named above are then explored based upon the interview data. Finally, some variations in the accounts of the farmers are noted.

5.2 A Profile of the Farming Families

5.2.1 Characteristics of the Farms and Farm Families

Twenty five farms and a total of 42 farmers were involved in the in-depth interviews. A variety of farm types were included in the sample of farms. These included dairy, sheep, cropping, pig, horse, chicken and mixed farming. The average farm size was 120 hectares. The two largest farms consisted of 400 hectares in area while the two smallest farms were approximately two hectares, both chicken farms.

Of the 25 farms, 21 can be described as full-time farming operations. That is, the farm provided the family's primary income. One couple falling into this category was of retirement age employing a farm manager to operate their farm. Four were part-time farmers sourcing their primary income away from the farm. The farming families that took part in the research consisted of several groups. These included farmers farming in the Selwyn District and farmers that had completed a subdivision in the District or whom were in the process of subdividing their land. The term farmer as used in this thesis encompasses both farming couples and individual farmers. Sometimes the term farming family has been used and has the same meaning as farmer in this thesis.
The longest time frame in which a farmer had lived on his farm was 62 years, this individual having been raised on the family farm. The shortest number of years any of the farming families had lived on their properties was four years. Sixteen of the farms had generational ties, that is at least two generations of a family having farmed the farm. The longest period of time a farm had been owned by a family was five generations. Of the farming families that had been there only one generation, some had still lived there for a significant period of time, for example, 27 years.

Most of the farming couples and individuals fell into the 40 to 60 years of age bracket as indicated by personal observation. Of the 25 families, seven children had taken on either parts or the whole of their parents' farm. Nine families reported that their children had decided not to take over the family farm and were pursuing other careers. A remaining eight families were undecided or unsure of whether their children would succeed the family farm or explained that it was not an issue they had yet explored to any great extent. One couple had no children, so succession by their children was therefore not an issue.

A number of factors were reported as beneficial in relation to where the farmers farmed or had farmed. These included, in most cases, close proximity to the city of Christchurch, namely the reduction in transport costs it provided being close to markets and a port. The farms were located in rural areas and yet were conveniently situated to Christchurch and the benefits a city provides. Soil was often raised with most farmers considering they had good soil for their farming requirements.

In terms of the dislikes about the areas in which the farming families farmed, the following issues arose. Some considered that their farms were becoming a little closer to Christchurch as it expanded. The value of land had risen significantly, therefore for farmers wishing to expand their farms it had become very expensive to purchase further land nearby. Given what income could be generated from the land many farmers felt they could not buy land at inflated prices. Also, the topic of weather, namely the hot, dry north westerly winds of Canterbury, often arose in conversation as a dislike. This was probably brought into prominence by the drought farmers were experiencing as the interviews took place. Traffic also arose as a dislike in relation to where some farmers were farming, particularly in the Ladbrooks and Broadfield areas. However, it must be noted that most farmers recognised that the increase in traffic was not necessarily because of an influx of population from those purchasing lifestyle blocks, but as a result of employment and educational facilities, particularly in the Lincoln area.

Nearly all of the farming families explained that the profitability of traditional farming enterprises had fallen (the reasons for this occurrence are discussed in greater detail under Theme 1, later in this chapter). Many farmers considered their income to be 'steady' and that while they were covering their costs, they did not perceive their outlook to be very promising.
5.2.2 The Non-Subdividers and the Likelihood of Subdivision

The previous section has characterised the farming families, their farms and their plans. This section discusses the likelihood of the farmers subdividing their farms. Eight farm families were classified as subdividers (see section 5.2.3 for further detail). Of the remaining 17 farm families (the non-subdividers), only four families considered that subdivision of their farms into lifestyle blocks was not an option in their lifetimes. Two of these farmers were involved in the chicken industry, both stating that their holdings were too small to be subdivided further. One farmer would never subdivide her land due to the flood potential of much of the farm as well as the fact the farm had been in family ownership for at least 100 years. A further farming couple explained that although they would not subdivide their farm, nevertheless this was not to say that their children would not do so in the future, as indicated by the following comment "It only takes one generation that's a bit tired and can see easy money and they sell it. They're too lazy to farm it."

Three farming families explained that they envisaged they would eventually be forced to subdivide their farms:

"It will probably be forced on us, not that we'd want to, no. I don't want to subdivide, no ... but rates wise and everything otherwise it will just be forced on us. The valuations go too high. The lifestyle blocks, that puts the valuations up, the rates up and everything like that, costs go up." (Antonia and Barry)

"It's the only option for us because of the size of the farm. It's not economical and because of the government valuation of it the only option is really to sell it off in the three titles that it's already in because if we don't do that someone will come in and buy it as a whole and do it anyway so we might as well have the money and that's basically what you're forced into doing." (Jock)

"You have people like us that now our place has become too small to be an economic unit and we would only be fools not to subdivide ourselves because if we didn't a developer would buy it and they would do it. So you're forced into a situation but we basically aren't very happy about it because some of the land around here and in other areas is far too good to be subdivided." (Jessey)

The remaining farmers did not rule out the possibility of subdivision at some time in the future whether it be carried out by themselves or a future generation of the family. It is of interest here to note that farmers often commented that if anyone was going to subdivide their farms they would prefer it to be themselves rather than a profiteering developer. Other

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1 Pseudonyms have been assigned to the quotations of the farmers for reasons of confidentiality. The names, while adding interest for the reader also show that a wide variety of opinions inform this chapter. Further, sometimes two names are provided as both partners made a contribution to the comment. The quotations are presented verbatim, to signify the essence of the farmers' accounts. Where necessary, brackets have been inserted to clarify particular points.
reasons given for why subdivision may occur at some time in the future included the view that eventually the farm may become too small to be viable economically, to provide finance to purchase a larger farm, perhaps further afield, to conduct improvements to the farm, to clear debt or mortgage and if a buyer offered a very good price. Some of the farms were already subdivided into numerous titles. This means that even if the Council modified subdivision policy, the titles could still be sold individually as they were already in existence.

5.2.3 The Subdividers and Reasons for Subdivision

As previously mentioned, eight farming families involved in the research can be classified as subdividers. Of these families, two had completed a subdivision and two had subdivided and were at the time in the process of selling their blocks. A further three were in the process of attaining resource consents for subdivisions they wished to complete, while one had subdivided a part of a dairy farm (a wintering block2) but was not intending to sell it until some time in the future. It is of interest to note that four of these farmers were part-time farmers3. Their primary income was sourced away from the farm. A further two were approaching retirement. The number of years the subdividers had lived on their properties ranged from 58, a farmer now farming a part of the family farm to four years, a part-time farmer.

Financial reasoning played an important part in the subdivision decision making process of the subdividers. The act of subdivision provides a cash input to develop capital of existing farms or in some instances to purchase a bigger farm elsewhere. This is exemplified by the following quotations:

"The main reason was so that we could get on and develop the rest of everything instead of having to do it piecemeal by the profits that you generated off the land. Now straight away you can have a big input, a cash input of money to develop everything else ... there's a limit to how much debt anybody could bear and we had some." (Pete)

"I sat down and I looked ... I own this marvellous 100 acres [40.48 ha]4 of Temuka Clay Loam and I thought what could I do. Well if you write down all the things that you can do with it, you can have sheep, run a few deer, milk cows, grow vegetables and everything. When you look down the list and subdivision's got to be one of them, the best return on capital's got to be subdivision and I suppose that influenced us the most." (Bill)

2 Many dairy farmers in New Zealand often hold a further piece of land (usually it is relatively dry) that is used for grazing their herd of cows during the wetter winter months (Moran, 1997).
3 Part-time farmers are a growing 'type' of farmer in many developed nations. Their existence reflects the need for off farm income to sustain the farming lifestyle (Rogers et al., 1988).
4 Many of the farmers communicated in acres, despite New Zealand converting to a metric system of measurement during 1976 (Department of Statistics, 1990). Brackets containing the equivalent area in terms of hectares have been inserted in the quotations where this has occurred.
A further subdividing farmer commented:

"I think the best thing about subdivision is that it frees up money. We were able to buy here because you are allowed to subdivide and we've been able to stay here because we were allowed to subdivide." (Maurice)

Some farmers also expressed family reasons as influencing their decision to subdivide. One farmer explained how his three sons were not interested in succeeding the family farm as had he and his brothers. The decision was also influenced by the income he generated from his farm "I'd become very disillusioned with the fact that I was not making money off the land, that with my sons not interested I just seemed to lose the enthusiasm." A further farming family had established a family trust on their wintering block, primarily to add value to the property when it was eventually sold for their children.

Awareness that the Council was in the process of altering subdivision rules and quite likely to increase allotment size criteria also encouraged some of the farmers to alter titles, ensuring that they could subdivide in the future. For instance:

"We were aware that the Council was busy with its book of rules and likely to restrict things all the more and restrict things rather than free them up ... so while the going was good we decided we would spend the money on subdividing, so if you like that safeguarded our future wealth." (Pete)

Other reasons were also provided although there was no pattern here, for example:

"We'll you've looked around and you've seen other farms being subdivided and you know that they've done quite well out of that and mmm, that's worth thinking about and you think well, if I sold that 370 acres [149.76 ha] and sold that as maybe one unit then maybe the next guy would have subdivided and that is exactly what happened when my brother sold ... I got to thinking, I want to sell out here, okay I've had enough, why should the next guy make the money out of subdividing, why not me, why not me!" (David)

One farmer explained that health reasons had led to his decision to sell a part of his farm. A recent heart attack had subsequently restricted his work levels, while his increasing age had also contributed to this decision. Also, one subdividing couple explained that they had actually received offers from individuals that had stopped on the side of the road inquiring about the purchase of their land.

Feelings of sentiment were not predominant in the accounts of subdividing farmers. Most when asked explained that they did not feel sentimental about their farms. The following response is a good example "I have no sentiment to it at all. That's terrible [laughs]. That's a fact isn't it (Bill). Oh yes it is, because farming's so horrible at the moment in some ways too, you're almost pleased not to have it." (Anne)
5.3 Themes Evident in the Accounts of the Farmers

The following themes have emerged from the accounts of the farmers. The five themes are:

1) The Economics of Agriculture;
2) Selwyn District Council Policy;
3) Soil and Production;
4) The Advantages and Disadvantages of Rural Subdivision;
5) Farmer Perceptions of Lifestylers.

The themes form the basis of the following description of the farmers' accounts.

5.3.1 Theme 1: The Economics of Agriculture

A persistent pattern evident in the accounts of the farmers was that financial returns achieved from farming were not particularly good. Some examples are provided by the following comments:

"Well we're standing still [laughs]. We've been running to stand still for a long time simply because it's an uneconomic unit." (Alex)

"Years ago it was profitable, you could make a good living in farming and improve and perhaps buy extra dirt and ... you had a good lifestyle and you were making money on your investment but today there just doesn't seem to be any way of heading that off and as I say we've been here a long time, we're well established but nevertheless whether you're established or not it still costs a terrific amount to run the place because your rates are going up, interest goes up on borrowed money or mortgage money all that sort of thing. All those things are going up all the time and we're not getting the returns for our efforts. That's the biggest problem." (Alex)

"I think farming's in a very depressive state. You choose it as a way of life. I think and yes it is an inheritance later on certainly, not a big money making thing [laughs]. Farming isn't what it used to be. I can't see farming ever getting back to what it was, which is sad really. It was such a main stay of the country." (Maureen)

Several underlying ideas arise from such comments. Both the increasing costs involved in farming and the economical viability of a small unit were dominant reasons as to why farmers were not receiving high financial returns. These themes are further illustrated by the following quotations:

"There's certainly got to be an improvement because being a small farm it can not sustain the increased costs for our product without an increase in price." (James)

"Two hundred acres [80.97 ha] at present is very marginal whether you can make a living off it ... I would say in ten to 20 years time this will be far too small for anybody to farm. Two hundred acres [80.97 ha] will be just too small." (Jane)
"I can remember when 1,000 ewes or 1,000 stock units was considered to be a good living. If you had a farm with 1,000 stock units on it, well that figures now nearly 4,000 and that's happened in my lifetime and in some ways I wonder when that's going to end, because unless you get bigger you don't survive." (Bill)

"I believe a lot of farmers around our area near where we live would be far better to whack their place into blocks and take their briefcase full of money and go and buy a larger place somewhere else. One or two are adding little bits of land to their holdings now, slowly getting slightly bigger and all they're doing is running to stand still. Their standard of living and what they're achieving isn't keeping pace with what's happening. Their lifestyle is actually slipping. They're not ... well they don't buy new cars now, new machinery, they buy second-hand ... they're propping up a lifestyle that is actually slipping away from them." (Bill and Anne)

Despite such comments there were a few farming families that perceived farming to have a bright future. For example:

"Probably might give an unfair view. I think farming if you've got your debt low and you make a good job of it, there is money in farming." (Kevin)

This particular farmer explained further that he had purchased his land at a time in which land was relatively inexpensive, and at one stage had farmed over 400 hectares. A large proportion had since been sold to his two sons and the money invested. This may therefore explain why he perceived farming to be prosperous. Two further farmers who were performing well financially, were both producers of chicken. They explained that their businesses were profitable and that the production of chicken meat was a growing industry.

Other reasons were also given as to why farming was not as profitable as it had been in the past. These included the percentage New Zealand agriculture contributed to overseas markets, the fall in the value of the New Zealand dollar and difficulties with the Asian market. For example:

"New Zealand, we're only such a small percentage of the world market that any slight fluctuation up or down makes a difference to our markets and ah ... you've only got to see the grain prices this year. You get a bad year, then a fall in prices - it's pretty hard going unless [you have] scale and quantity it's not really worthwhile. So what is the good land good for, possibly sometimes people living on it is just as good as anything else." (Bob)

Many farmers recognised that in some instances subdivision of pastoral farms provided money for farmers to continue farming their land. For example:

"The fact that our neighbour subdivided off a four acre [1.62 ha] block off a big farm of dry land meant he could then use that money to buy irrigation and went into an irrigation system debt free and his production off that, his three or 400 acre [121.43 or 161.9 ha] block is four times as much as it was before, because he's subdivided." (Maurice)
In addition to a general theme expressed by most farmers that farming was not particularly profitable were strong comments about the Selwyn District Council and how they were approaching the issue of rural subdivision.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Selwyn District Council Policy

Amongst the farmers that took part in the research there existed a feeling of discontent regarding the manner in which the Selwyn District Council was approaching the issue of rural subdivision, both at present and in the past. Three clear patterns emerged across the accounts of the farmers. These included a lack of direction by the Council with regard to where rural subdivision policy was focussed, concern in relation to the speed at which rural subdivision is occurring within the District and concern over allotment sizes.

The first pattern, a lack of clear direction by the Council, is indicated by such comments as "It's a shambles" and "The rules keep changing." Some other remarks included:

"Well to me they're [the Council] very, very inconsistent. One minute they stop and somebody can't build a house and the next minute someone comes along and builds a house." (Barry)

"I think they've lost control." (Helen)

Concern in relation to the speed at which the phenomenon of rural subdivision is occurring is portrayed by the following comments:

"I just think that it's happened and it's got out of control, totally out of control." (Joanne)

"I think they've let the 'horse bolt' and I think they're having a job to contain it now." (Alex)

"... the spread of it is quite frightening really." (Steve)

"... the spread of it in my opinion is alarming." (Steve)

Many farmers considered that the Council's decision in the abolished Proposed District Plan of establishing a minimum allotment size of 40 hectares for subdivision in the rural zones to be far too large for those wishing to farm part-time or just live in the country. This is illustrated by the following comments:

"One hundred acres [40.48 ha] is a farmable situation and no individual is going to buy 100 acres [40.48 ha] and build a house on 100 acres [40.48 ha] and yet be able to use it as a hobby farm because that area has to be farmed." (James)

"The 100 acre [40.48ha] restriction they were going to bring in was a bit over the top ... my theory is why should they have to have 25 or 50 acres [10.19 or
20.24 ha] when they only want two or three [0.81 or 1.21 ha]. It makes more sense to divide it up smaller and give them something they can manage that way. Very few people want a 50 acre [20.24 ha] block but a lot of people would want three or four acres [1.21 or 1.62 ha]." (Ron)

"When the new plan came out they made the minimum size subdivision 40 hectares which is 100 acres [40.48 ha]. To me that was an idiotic thing to do. For a start they got something like 3,500 submissions against that, against that one thing. People didn't ... why give them 100 acres [40.48 ha] to muck up. People don't want that much, it was far too big. When they realise that really most 100 acres [40.48 ha] wouldn't support a family, you'd have to have another job as well ... but most people you talk to, developers and people that buy sections, they look for about ... two or three hectares. They want a house in the country and they want to run a pony and a few sheep and that's what they're looking for, but our Council seem to completely disregard that and ... I actually wonder if whoever wrote the plan thought if we chuck this 40 hectare minimum size in what a lot of work we'd get [laughter]. Well they did, they created an awful amount of work ... even four hectares is better than 40 hectares." (Anne and Bill)

"Most people who come to the country don't want lots of land. They just want a small block of land they can look after and enjoy, and so most councils, I believe are going the wrong way. They're trying to increase the land size, but they [the lifestylers] can't look after it, so it's not productive, whereas a four hectare block is small ... the ultimate in my opinion is two hectares. That's all people want. They can build a house and have a goat, a sheep and a dog and three kids." (Trevor)

Several other ideas emerged in relation to Council policy. These were not dominant themes and were only expressed by one or two farmers. For example, some farmers did not like to see blocks that had already been cut off farms re-subdivided and sold. For instance:

"Once they let people start building here and there, the annoying part about it is if they could buy a ten acre [4.05 ha] block or a 20 acre [8.10 ha] block that should've been it but what was happening is that those who got in through the door and got the initial start and then all of a sudden you'd find oh well, we'll hock a bit off the back or subdivide again and they were subdividing the subdivisions and splitting it into three acre [1.21 ha] blocks or four acre [1.62 ha] blocks and they all wanted tarsealed roads, streets lights, rubbish collection and all the rest of it and um that was really the let down and its too late now." (Alex)

"Up in Darfield they did subdivision and they were all going to be nice little blocks and now you see them being re-subdivided and that's wrong because it was all set out nicely. It was going to be a really nice area and that's not pleasing ... and now you see that they're subdividing little parts which is not good." (Dianne)

In addition to the issue of the need for policy improvements in the accounts of the farmers were the issues that rural subdivision lead to a loss of land to farming, a fall in production and a wastage of good soil. However, it was predominantly the non-subdividing farmers that expressed such views.
5.3.3: Theme 3: Soil and Production

Many of the farming families considered the loss of good quality farmland to rural subdivision for lifestyle blocks to be a regrettable occurrence. For example:

"... it's good farmland and that's a shame and that's my biggest concern. In lots of cases good land is cut up for subdivision. That's a crying shame." (Alex)

"It is sad that there's all that land going to waste. There's lots of houses going up. It really is sad but there's nothing else you can do." (Dianne)

"I feel sad to see the good land down here being subdivided because I know that it's high producing land ... I think it's sad to see it in some instances but really you won't stop it." (Helen)

Many of the farmers considered rural subdivision and the resulting lifestyle blocks led to a decrease in production attained from the land. The following comments portray this viewpoint:

"I don't mind if it's not on really good farmland, if it's up in the dry areas where it's not ... where the ground doesn't produce very much it's not too bad, but I don't like to see good producing farms just being sold. They should really be kept for production rather than just a person coming out to build a house as a lifestyle." (Anna)

One farmer considered the viewpoints of farmers who perceived that rural subdivision took good farmland out of production to be a rather selfish attitude:

"I think that's a selfish point of view. I have no trouble with it at all. Once again it's supply and demand so it's taking my competitors out of operation and production. The one problem is if it's right next to me it means I can't buy that good quality land, but then again if someone has a better use for it compared to farming then fair enough." (Ron)

However, some farmers did recognise that production could actually increase with rural subdivision farming activities. This is clearly shown via the following comment:

"You go into areas, not necessarily here where you can see what can be generated off those blocks and what has been generated in the past and although the land may have been good, a lot of farmers sit back and sort of say oh yes it was good land and they've done it but how much was actually coming off it beforehand ... I just look here in our area and see some of the land that's been sold back into those small blocks in relationship to what it was when it was in total farms it is totally different and I would think the majority of them are doing quite well out of it." (Russel)

A further farmer in the process of subdividing his farm recognised that there are two perspectives to this argument:
"If you look at the statistics for the places that have been subdivided like ours, two out of 20 will produce more than what the farmer produces now and the other 18 will be a waste of time [laughter]. They'll just be hobby farms. You look at everywhere else it's happened, that's what happens. Two of them, well one in ten is the ratio they work on will do very well. They'll grow flowers, they'll do something and they'll lift up the land production more than what was there before." (Bill)

One farmer commented that she did not consider rural subdivision to be a loss in production but rather a change in production. "I just see the production being changed from conventional farming to different styles of farming. Sometimes it can actually be increased." (Maureen)

Another in the process of subdividing his land commented "There's a lot of places where poorer quality land is producing far more than it has done for ... for centuries, well ever" (Bob). This farmer did though recognise that it was a shame when rural subdivision occurred on good quality farmland.

Many farmers considered there to be areas within the Selwyn District that were more appropriate for rural subdivision to occur upon. Often, areas such as Burnham, Rolleston and West Melton were given as the soil in such areas tends to be dry and stony. However, in suggesting this, some farmers considered that it would be unfair to implement policy enabling farmers in certain areas to subdivide and not in other areas, for example:

"There is land in Selwyn that is not very productive, possibly the Rolleston and Burnham area because it is dry. It's still quite productive, but not as productive, so maybe that's a better area, but I don't believe you can dictate to people where they're allowed to subdivide or where they can build or live ... because you can't have one rule for part of the country and not the other." (Trevor)

A farmer in the process of subdividing his farm commented:

"I don't like the idea of your very good land being chopped up and yet do I have the right to say well yes, I can subdivide mine and ha, ha, you can't. The fact that I had financial difficulties doesn't mean to say that the person on the heavy land hasn't got financial difficulties but in general, no, I wouldn't like to see a subdivision on heavy land." (David)

Plates 5.1 and 5.2 (see overleaf) provide visual examples of lifestyle blocks on both 'light' and 'heavy' land. The accounts of the farmers frequently suggested that 'light' land was more suitable for lifestyle subdivision.

A further interesting idea that arose in reference to soil and production, was the point that if someone wished to purchase a lifestyle block with the intention of undertaking an agricultural or horticultural activity, it is likely that relatively good soil would be necessary.
Plate 5.1: Lifestyle block on 'heavy' land, Ladbrooks.

Plate 5.2: Lifestyle block located on 'lighter' soils, Charing Cross.
This is exemplified by the following comments:

"A lot of things you can't do up on the lizard country at Rolleston anyway, you have got to have some good land." (Peter)

"I suppose you and I'd be the same if we wanted to build a house we'd want good dirt. We wouldn't want to put it on stones ... but it seems a shame when they started building on very prime land." (Alex)

Several farmers expressed a concern that good productive agricultural land may run out. For instance:

"I don't honestly think New Zealand can allow itself the luxury of having a five acre [2.02 ha] paradise for everybody. It just can't go on. We don't have enough land. They're not making any more land, so we're soon going to run out." (Kevin)

"I don't think they should have let some of the really good land be subdivided that they have but while I say that I can see on the other side that it was the only way that some farmers were able to keep going on the land." (Jock)

5.3.4 Theme 4: The Advantages and Disadvantages of Rural Subdivision

This section discusses the advantages and disadvantages of subdivision that emerged in the accounts of the farmers. For ease of analysis, the discussion is divided into two separate sections: the community, and farming. Most farmers, both subdividers and the non-subdividers, considered rural subdivision to bring both advantages and disadvantages. In general, more disadvantages to farming practises than advantages could be thought of by the non-subdividing farmers, while the subdividing farmers tended to emphasise the positive impacts subdivision of farmland brought.

5.3.4.1 Community Advantages and Disadvantages

Many of the small rural schools in the Selwyn District have benefited from the influx of families with young children. Some farmers reported of schools facing closure now employing additional teaching staff due to a rise in school roles. Examples given included Broadfield, Ladbrooks and West Melton primary schools.

As one subdividing farmer explained:

"A lot of these little primary schools would've closed down if it hadn't been for these younger families coming out ... at Ladbrooks they're coming from all over the place to go to this little school because it's getting them out of the urban environment." (Garry)

Several farming families explained how a rise in the number of children in their area had ensured the continuity of the school bus service:
"When we came here the population would have been four families and yet now there's probably 18 or 20 families. So there's 60 extra children here which has kept the school bus going. This block here has kept the school bus service going for the whole Irwell area." (Maurice)

Some farmers reported that rural subdivision brought more advantages for local businesses. This was emphasised in particular, by those in the process of subdividing their farms. Some examples are provided below:

"The likes of Leeston as a town needs people. There are shops there, if we put 20 homes on our place they may not get 20 families buying in Leeston but they may get five or six which has got to be good for the District." (Bill)

"A lot of them work off the farm, like in Christchurch, they also bring a lot of money, like if you look around a small subdivided block, they all have the best of everything, they always have a fancy irrigation system for their trees, they spend a lot of money which is good." (Bill)

"They may not buy their groceries in the little town, they may still get them in Christchurch because it's quite a disadvantage because groceries are higher in the country but then after a while I think they tend to can't be bothered to do that." (Anne)

"The likes of the stock and station firms, I think a lot of their trade is with the lifestyle blocks because they're buying taps and feeders for their horses. They may not buy the super and the manure but they buy the swimming pool chemicals and all those sort of things." (Anne)

Many farmers recognised that subdivision of farmland brought improvements to the District, particularly in terms of infrastructure and services that benefited everyone. For instance:

"Subdivision's basically done nothing for farmers but it's done a lot for the District in respect to putting more money, ratepayers in the Council hand and improving facilities for those who are in it." (Trevor)

Most farmers did not perceive there to be a great deal of disadvantages brought to rural communities through rural subdivision. They tended to emphasise more the positive aspects it brought to the community.

However, one consistent trend was that the purchasers of lifestyle blocks did not mix with the locals as much as farmers originally thought they perhaps may. One farmer explained that lifestyle block owners did not want to be a part of the District. More details in relation to the interaction between farming families and lifestyle block owners are provided later in this chapter under Theme 5: Farmer Perceptions of the Lifestylers.

Several farmers emphasised the loss of the farming community spirit, although this was not a dominant pattern. For example:
"I think it was a better community when it was a totally a farming community. We knew everybody, people cared about one another more and I think nowadays people come out and often ... we get on well with all of our neighbours but we often don't see them. It's changed completely from a farming community, really they're the best." (Barry)

"When this sort of thing happens, you lose the farming community spirit because everybody's busy doing their own things. Usually they're away at weekends or they're flat out at weekends and often you'll find that you haven't really got an awful lot in common with people anyway." (Garry)

Many of the farming couples and individuals interviewed explained that they were unable to comment on the activities they had once taken part in with their children as their children no longer lived at home and participated in local activities.

One interesting change to the community, raised by several farmers was the increase in burglars in the District. For instance "One time you used to be able to sit on your tractor and you knew every car that went down the road. Now you don't know any of them or very few of them." It was not implied that those purchasing the lifestyle blocks were the burglars but as there were different motor vehicles in the community it was difficult to determine whether a passing vehicle was perhaps out of the ordinary.

5.3.4.2 Farming Advantages and Disadvantages

Most farmers paused to contemplate the advantages they considered rural subdivision brought to their farming activities. It was frequently remarked that disadvantages as opposed to advantages came to mind. Both the advantages and disadvantages are discussed in the following section.

Financial Benefits

"Well you can not stop progress and although I would like to have thought subdivision never took place ... unless it hadn't happened I would not have had such a highly valued farm. It's because obviously subdivision puts land values up." (Trevor)

The main advantage consistent throughout the accounts of all the farmers was the financial benefits that could potentially be gained if a farmer chose to sell all or a part of his or her farm. This enabled farmers to develop their farms further, for example, the establishment of an irrigation system or the purchase of more land. Several farmers provided examples of farmers they were aware of that had sold parts of their farms. This had reduced their debt levels, providing finance to undertake improvements within their farming programmes.

5This finding supports research by Taylor and Little (1995) that parents often socialise according to the activities of their children.
Opportunities to Cut Hay, Silage and Graze
A further advantage expressed was the opportunity to lease or graze nearby lifestyle blocks. Small blockholders frequently had surplus grass during the spring months. Often, they did not know how to utilise the growth as they did not own livestock. Several dairy farmers provided examples of how they had been offered grazing by lifestyleers. A further dairy farmer explained he had benefited through not having to graze his cows out of the District during the winter months. He was able to graze the properties of neighbouring lifestyleers:

"I graze some blocks around here. Before that I've always grazed cows out and I used to have to take them out of the District." (Barry)

Additional Labour
The availability of labour units also occasionally arose as an advantage. In particular, teenage children were often available during holiday periods for farm employment as is exemplified by the following comment:

"With families moving into the area it can bring in additional labour with school children looking for jobs during the holidays and so forth and that's quite an advantage." (Ron)

Contracting Work
An increase in opportunity for contracting work was another advantage expressed by some farmers. Lifestyle blocks owners often did not have the equipment necessary to work their land. Therefore, it was necessary to hire contractors to perform certain tasks. This provided supplementary income for some farming families as indicated by the following comment:

"We've got a reasonable amount of gear around here. We do a little bit of contracting for them so it creates a little bit of extra income. You know, you do a bit of baling for them. They've all got their jolly little plots of land which tend to be too small for a farmer and too big for a sandpit." (Russel)

One subdividing farmer even went to the extent of explaining contracting had provided the means for the children of a farming family he was aware of to remain on the land.

In general, most farmers tended to be more eager to emphasise the disadvantages that rural subdivision brought to their farming practises. These are discussed in the sections that follow.

Limits to Farm Expansion
The price of land as a result of the demand for lifestyle blocks in many of the farming areas of the Selwyn District has meant land has become very expensive for farmers to purchase:

"I think land has got far too dear for what it returns." (James)
"The land values go that high [that] if you want to get out of here you have to subdivide to get out because genuine farmers just can't afford to buy it. You've got to chop it into smaller parcels, well to be able to get the maximum out of your land." (John)

Many farmers considered that it was cheaper to buy land further afield. With improvements in irrigation, areas traditionally thought of as unsuitable for farming were now proving to be very successful such as Te Pirita. It was also explained that given the income that could potentially be generated from farming, farmers could not justify paying such high prices for land.

**Loss of Land to Pastoral Farming**
A consistent disadvantage that arose was the view that the purchase of land for lifestyle blocks led to the loss of land to farming forever. For example:

"I think the Plains really ... I'd have to say I'm anti-subdivision. I feel that the Plains are just getting subdivided. It's ruining it really. Well they're not making any more land and we need land to feed the people and the thing is the values have got so high that they can't be incorporated back into farms." (Joanne and Kevin)

However, several subdividing farmers did emphasise that rural subdivision is not irreversible. Small blocks could be bought and reconstituted as a larger farm. One farmer provided an example where orchard blocks had been bulldozed and converted to dairying in the Bay of Plenty. It was though, recognised that this would be a rather costly exercise and an economic incentive would need to exist for someone to decide to undertake this activity. It was also raised that the likelihood of a number of small blocks occurring on the market at any one time would be fairly remote. Further, it was suggested that if this did occur, most probably, the blocks would be over capitalised.

**Difficulties in Shifting Livestock Along the Road**
Difficulties experienced while shifting livestock along the road frequently arose as a disadvantage. Lifestylers were characterised as impatient commuters, forever in a hurry, speedy travellers and generally as lacking an understanding of livestock. An example of the viewpoint of a farmer is provided below:

"We've had problems with grazing sheep on the roadside. They're actually quite impatient because we think we own the roadside and maybe they've got a case. We've had abuse." (Ron)

Although farmers suggested that commuters made day to day farming activities a little more difficult, it was also recognised that as farmers they did not have exclusive rights to

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6Conversion of 'lighter' land traditionally thought of as unsuitable for dairying is a significant trend that has occurred in the Selwyn District over the last decade. Availability of irrigation and improved dairy prices have contributed to this outcome (SDC, 1995).
country roads, acknowledging that roads are designed primarily for traffic. For some farmers, particularly dairy farmers requiring the use of roads on a regular basis, it was explained that there was now a need to be more considerate and think about the time their herd of cows was let out onto the road. This meant trying to avoid the times of day that commuters travelled to work. There also now existed a need for greater awareness when shifting livestock along roads due to the increased traffic. This facilitated the need for provision of livestock signs, flashing lights and further staff to guide livestock. However, this was perceived as not necessarily a negative consequence by those farmers it affected.

Also, of interest was the purchase of further land by one farmer in liaison with the Council. This had enabled him to take a more direct route with his large herd of cows. At the time the interview occurred, the farmer was in the process of testing a large rubber mat to be stored on roadside and rolled out each time his herd of cows crossed the road. This was necessary as complaints had been voiced concerning the mess left on the road by his cows and consequent soiling of motorcars.

Complaints About Noises, Odour and Dust
Most farmers while acknowledging that they were aware of instances where complaints had been voiced about the noise, odour and dust generated from farming activities had not been affected greatly or had received few direct complaints other than hearing the odd indirect rumour. For instance:

"We haven't had too many complaints directly, but we sort of hear that so and so doesn't like this, or damn cows or whatever (Margaret). I try to make things livable with other people. I don't go out of my way to annoy people but it's becoming more and more difficult and probably to give you an example, because we've got small blocks of land around us we've got irrigators that run 24 hours a day and at night time these irrigators do have noise associated with them and that keeps people awake, but you can't do anything about it." (Trevor)

"Some of the concerns the farmers have I share, I wouldn't like to think that what I did stopped them farming. I know things like machinery working all night in America, there's ... if you're near a town some of the farmers can't work after ten o'clock at night because the noise, well I wouldn't like to think that I did that, by subdividing my place that I stopped my neighbours doing that." (Bill)

One farmer explained how complaints had been expressed with regard to his driving of a harvester late at night and the dust created while working a paddock. A family on a lifestyle block had telephoned to complain on several occasions, later entering the paddock to make their concerns known.

Another interesting variation that arose relating to the issue of noise is that the lifestylers themselves generate noise:
"It's like living in suburbia on a Saturday or Sunday morning. They've all got their ride on lawnmowers, weedeaters and kids with four-wheel-drive motorbikes. It's noisy. They do all their work in the weekends to catch up because they don't have time." (Wendy)

However, this view was only expressed by one farming couple and is more of a social issue than an impact upon the activity of farming.

A Rise in Rates
Many farmers explained that their rates had risen with the occurrence of rural subdivision. For instance:

"The valuations go too high. The lifestyle blocks ... that puts the valuations and rates up. You get a little block fetching $10,000 an acre and up go the rates. That's twice the amount you have to pay." (Trish and John)

An Increase in Dogs in the District
People moving onto lifestyle blocks often brought dogs with them. From the perspective of the farmer this raises problems. Dogs are a problem for livestock farmers, particularly unsupervised roaming dogs. The activity of dog walking can scare grazing livestock, a major problem at lambing time leading to the mismothering of ewes and lambs.

Most farmers were very careful with the feeding of their own working dogs, although scattered dog faeces along roadsides meant their own animals could pick up diseases such as sheep measles when shifting livestock along the road. An example is provided by this comment:

"... pressure with dogs, especially with the new hydatids rules. We're still getting ovus [sic] in our stock and that's come from somewhere. Our dogs are tested and clean." (Helen)

Although no farmers had been directly affected by roaming lifestyler dogs it was a concern. An interesting variation that did arise, though not directly related to farming practises was the presence of yapping dogs tied up during the day while the owners were away to work. Many farmers found yapping dogs irritating. The following quotation nicely sums up the general attitude of the farmers to dogs:

"Well, you're going to get a lot more farms with dogs, with people going to work and they get one dog and the next thing they've got three or four dogs and that is going to be our biggest worry ... I'm afraid when they all get dogs it's going to be a bit of a headache." (Neville)

Unkempt Long Grass
Long, dry grass along roadsides, in paddocks and among tree allotments often arose as a concern by the farmers "Another concern I have with lifestyle blocks is a lot of them are planting trees and there's a fair amount of growth and I see that in the summer of
Canterbury as a fire danger." This was particularly so in dry areas such as Darfield, Dunsandel, Greendale, Hororata and West Melton. However, only one farmer could provide an example of an instance where a fire had actually occurred. This concern may have been exacerbated by the weather conditions at the time, namely, being very dry with drought conditions.

**Small Paddock Sizes**

Although the leasing or grazing of lifestyle block paddocks was perceived as beneficial by farmers, the small size of block paddocks presents difficulties to the farmer. Namely difficulties in manoeuvring machinery. For instance:

"Small blocks are very hard to operate big machinery in. There is an opportunity there [for grazing] but it's very limited because most of them have their black sheep and white duck and cow and you've got to mow around all those bloody animals and go through a million gates to get to what you want." (Trevor)

**Spraying Difficulties**

With many lifestyle block owners operating horticulture enterprises upon their properties this poses problems for conventional farmers. This means farmers have to be more careful with regard to timing and weather conditions for spray application. It is also necessary to notify neighbours. For instance:

"The other problem is spraying, that's become more and more difficult." (Alex)

One farmer explained how he had experienced difficulties spraying his paddock of grass seed due to the risk it posed to tomatoes in the glasshouse of a neighbouring lifestyle property. To lessen the risk, the farmer was required to apply a different type of spray to his crop. The spray was not as effective and actually caused some damage to his crop.

**Borrowing of Farm Equipment**

It was noted that often blockholders did not have their own farm equipment and sometimes came to neighbouring farmers to borrow equipment. The large majority of the farming families stated that they did not lend their equipment to lifestyleing neighbours "We've made it quite clear, there are some things we just don't lend." This was essentially because the equipment was important for their own farming activities as well as being expensive. It was required to be in good repair for their own purposes. Many of the farmers commented that they had a policy of not lending farming equipment, but perhaps only to a select few full-time farmers that were both neighbours and friends. Nevertheless, there were several farmers that had helped their blockholding neighbours and had undertaken the required task themselves to ensure the equipment was used correctly:

"I do jobs for people but it is difficult. It's quite simple, when you own ten acres [4.05 ha], you just about need to have the same amount of equipment as you do for 100 acres [40.48 ha] and that's where the problem lies." (Trevor)
Altering of Water Races

A network of water races exists in various areas of the Selwyn District. They provide water for livestock as well as proving useful for firefighting purposes. Several instances were recounted where blockholders had damned or tampered with the course of water races for their own irrigation purposes. This was a concern as water was necessary for livestock during the summer months. One farmer also explained that he was aware of some lifestylers not wishing to pay for the stock water races as part of their rates "There was talk at one stage that a lot of these lifestylers didn't want to pay the rates on their water races." They felt they did not obtain any direct benefits from their existence. They neglected to realise that they could though be very useful in an emergency.

A Shortage in Water Supply

Some farmers explained that they had noticed a shortage in their water supply as a result of greater housing densities where they farmed. More people were drawing upon underground water supplies for domestic purposes with many also having irrigation systems for their blocks. Some also noted that although they had not noticed changes to their water supply to any great extent, it could be a concern in the future. Examples are provided via the following quotations:

"Well I think that the water may be one of these days a problem as you get more and more subdivisions drawing off more and more water and they all want to irrigate their little bit." (Antonia)

"It puts pressure on the wells of other people and when you lose your water supply that you've had for 100 years it's a bit of a concern. I can't understand why an unreasonable amount of wells go in without consideration for the existing people." (Helen)

Farm Advice

Most farmers explained that they were more than happy to provide farming advice to lifestyle blockholders when asked. However, it was noted that whether or not the advice was taken was a different matter. As one farmer so eloquently commented "They seem to know everything anyway." Also, many of the lifestyle block owners undertook non-traditional farming enterprises such as truffle or emu production which conventional farmers tended to lack familiarity with.

Variations

A few other disadvantages arose in the accounts of the farmers but they were not particularly prevalent. For example, a greater number of mailboxes along the roadside presents difficulties when training horses along the road. With the advent of lifestyle blocks there now existed further gates to close when shifting livestock along the road. Friends of lifestyle block owners sometimes wished to visit conventional farms, for instance, to view the milking of cows. This raised issues with the Health and Safety Act.
Also, occasionally arising were poor weed control and negligence of animal health by lifestyle block owners. The next section discusses how farmers perceive the lifestylers.

5.3.5 Theme 5: Farmer Perceptions of Lifestylers

5.3.5.1 Characteristics of the Lifestylers

A diversity of terms existed for the owners of lifestyle blocks. These included lifestylers, blockies, townies, yuppies and blockholders. Some dominant patterns emerged in relation to how the lifestylers were perceived by the farmers. Firstly, the majority of farming families considered that many of the lifestylers fell into the 30 to 50s age bracket. Most tended to be double income families although this was not always the case. It was also explained that most tended to have well paid professional jobs in the city. For instance:

"I would think yes, they're two income families. They drop their kids off to school. Dad's gone and he's gone in the old car and mum's in the yuppie wagon and then she dashes off and then there's a mad panic to pick them up at three or someone else picks them up. I think in most cases they are both working." (Alex)

5.3.5.2 The Homes of the Lifestylers

Many farming families commented upon the 'mansions' that the lifestylers tended to build:

"They seem to be able to ... most of them build a fairly big place, a fairly elaborate looking place, and then they seem to be able to spend money on their sections fairly quickly, like buying large trees or putting up fences and things as though they're well off to be able to do this. They seem to have money somehow." (Anna)

"The homes are a hell of a big [laughs], ostentatious and pretty extensive landscaping." (Wendy)

"It surprises me the amount of people that have the money to buy these lifestyle blocks and put up enormous mansions." (Claire)

"A lot of wasted resources, too big a home they put up too, I mean really today you don't need a big home. They put up these huge ... so many rooms and then all of a sudden there's only two there and it's wasted." (Kevin)

Plates 5.3 and 5.4 provide visual examples of the large homes of the lifestylers that were referred to by many of the farmers.

5.3.5.3 Social Interaction Between Farmers and Lifestylers

A general pattern in the accounts of the farmers was that the lifestylers did not mix with the local community to any great extent. Most continued with their town activities and
Plate 5.3: Lifestyle home, Greenpark.

Plate 5.4: Lifestyle home, Ladbrooks.
friendships. Some examples of the viewpoints of the farming families are provided by the quotations that follow:

"Myself, I find that the type of people that come out to these blocks are persons that have interests in town. They work in town or have friends in town and therefore they're not particularly interested in the community as such, only perhaps the school if they've got children going there. It sort of adds to the difficulty in the area of having any sort of community spirit and it does seem to attract a certain type of person generally who want the best of all worlds." (Grant)

"A lot of them are carrying on the same activities that they did when they were in town and the same sporting activities that their children do is still done in town and not in the community. Some fit into the community but quite a lot don't and still carry on with their town activities and connections." (John)

"... in a rural area like we are you get a different type of person in those subdivisions, that are not prepared to be ah ... to put the effort into the community ... and they're more sort of like a town mentality where they are takers and not givers, but that doesn't apply to everybody but a lot of them. They're just ... they're just living there. They're not prepared to give the extra time to coach sports teams or they want their children to be in a team but they don't want to help." (Kevin)

"You go and call on [them] and they say they've come out here to get away from people knocking on our door. Really they don't have anything to do with you at all." (Dianne)

"It's so isolated but that's why a lot of them go up there. They don't want to have anything to do with people, they're sick of people and they like to be left out." (Kevin)

5.3.5.4 The Success of Lifestyle Enterprises

An interesting pattern that emerged in the accounts of many of the farmers was the fact that lifestylers did not tend to last for a significant period of time on their properties. Examples are provided below. Some properties were too new for any comments to be given on such matters:

"Our neighbours have changed [shifted away] so much in the ten years we've been here." (Jean)

"It's a changing community and a lot of the lifestyle blocks, people only really stay five years and generally move on." (Claire)

"... people have got this idea that lifestyling is great but a lot of them don't always work out and they move back to town. They think it's going to be great but then they realise they've got no gear to do this and that. They think it's going to be great on ten acres [4.05 ha]. They're still working in town, possibly they both work and if they want to perhaps make a little bit of money off their place they really haven't got the gear and then they think they can borrow gear. There's a lot of money involved in gear so it doesn't work out. If they want to do something, work, they realise it costs a lot." (Anna)
"When they first come you'd go and take them jam and eggs and things and then two years later they've gone, and you do the next lot and after two or three lots you give up because they're never there long enough." (Dianne)

The reasons for why lifestylers did not seem to last for a significant period of time on their properties are explored below:

"I reckon about three or four years then if they're going to make it but if they're not they're gone by then. It's the pressure it's just too much. They come home on a Friday night and they're tired and suddenly there's all this work to do in the weekend and they don't have the resources, the machinery and the equipment. A lot of them don't have the knowledge. They have a few stock but they don't know how to manage them and to be fair a lot of them come and ask but a lot just don't know. They're not ignorant, they try, but it all just becomes too much." (Kevin)

"I think if they have an eight to five job, five days a week and come home, they're keen for a start and suddenly they get tired. The other thing they do is the first thing they do is put a live animal on it and then when they want to go away for a weekend say like they've been used to in the city, someone's got to look after it and that's one of the first mistakes they make." (Jessey)

"They're wasting an hour in their car a day and they're tired. They get home and there are wee jobs to do which they're not interested in. Then they think they're going to have a good weekend and it doesn't work out and they just can't handle it." (Joanne and Kevin)

"A lot of people find that once they get out here they've got no time to themselves at the weekends. They're doing work on the land and haven't got much time for a social life. They find it a bit of a bore really but quite a few come out with younger children and they get a pony or two and once the children leave school they find that oh well ... and head away back to town." (Kent)

Such comments suggest that lifestylers are often tired and do not realise the amount of work and time that may be necessary to maintain their blocks of land. As a consequence, it seems that from the perspective of the farmers it can become too much for the lifestylers.

5.4 Variations in the Accounts of the Farmers

Several variations arose in the accounts of a few farmers. The first is the potential environmental advantages rural subdivision can bring. Below are some examples indicating what some farmers thought about this:

"... it beautifies the place with more trees around and sure it takes a year or two when a house is built for trees to grow but the area I'm thinking of in particular is the Old West Coast Road from West Melton through to Yaldhurst. That was some of the boniest old land that you'd find anywhere in New Zealand. I think there was half an inch of top soil depth and that was about it, stones through to the surface and everything. It was just like driving through desert and now every couple of hundred yards there's a dwelling. They've put water on it. They've got all fancy
trees growing and well done, it's great. I think it's enhanced the countryside rather than the opposite." (David)

"I think its pleasing to the eye, you go down Waterholes road, which used to be quite a grotty little area, they've got irrigation and trees, and really it has improved the whole road. It's pleasing to the eye." (Claire)

"... you can drive through some areas of rural subdivision which are in my estimation a lot more attractive than what they were before." (Russel)

Such comments suggest the planting of trees by lifestylers are aesthetically pleasing to the rural landscape. It is of interest here to note that while few farmers discussed the environmental benefits that have occurred or that could potentially occur through rural subdivision, very few referred to environmental disadvantages. However, one farmer did provide the following comment:

"It's got to change the environment somehow, you lose your wildlife. I've noticed a bit of that, like your pheasants. I never hear any frogs now and hardly see any owls and that's real nature." (Wendy)

A further farming couple who had travelled to other parts of the world gave the following opinion:

"I don't believe it has too much of an effect on the environment because I've travelled overseas and seen what environments are like over there and New Zealand's the best in the world and it's going to be for a long, long time, because we've got no people here. It's not populated. There's more sheep than people here." (Trevor)

In addition to the environmental issue, one farming couple explained that a period of time away from the District had made them more accepting of the occurrence of rural subdivision:

"I think we changed our opinions quite a bit ... I suppose initially we weren't that keen ... like if we go back to the time before we went to Australia I probably didn't like seeing what I considered to be good farm land split into blocks but after I went to Australia, I had a look around a bit and I think we really accepted it better. We could see that it's going to happen anyway. We were amazed at the number of small blocks that had happened in the two and a half years we were away in the Selwyn District and I guess because we had travelled a little bit, yes it does change your ideas." (Bill and Anne)

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the accounts of farmers of the Selwyn District in relation to rural subdivision. A number of themes have been highlighted. They include: a falling profitability in traditional farming; discontent over rural subdivision policy; and the view that subdivision of farmland results in a loss of production. Farmers recognise that rural
subdivision brings both advantages and disadvantages to the community and farming activity. However, there is a clear emphasis upon the problems it brings to their farming activity. It seems that lifestylers and farmers do not interact to any great extent and farmers do not consider that lifestylers are very successful in terms of their achievements. The next chapter provides analysis of these themes by explaining how particular themes are associated with particular groups of farmers, their meaning, and whether or not a narrative exists.
6.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter analyses the results presented in Chapter 5. Using a thematic narrative analysis, the accounts of the farming families of the Selwyn District are interpreted with the main purpose being to determine whether there exists a single coherent narrative of rural subdivision or whether there are multiple, potentially conflicting narratives. First, the shared and contrasting themes evident in the accounts of the different farmer groups and their meaning are discussed in terms of the existence of one or more narratives. Second, other issues arising from the farmers' accounts are interpreted by reference to the literature reviewed previously, as well as some further literature to aid interpretation. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for farm structure, rural subdivision planning policy and rural resource studies methodology. Lastly, topics worthy of future research are noted.

6.2 Review of Findings

The primary research objective of this thesis was to identify farmer perspectives upon rural subdivision and develop an understanding of farmers' experiences and responses to the phenomenon of rural subdivision. Some more specific research objectives were also formulated. These included identifying the reasons for the occurrence of subdivision, the advantages and disadvantages that occur through subdivision, how farmers perceive lifestylers, and viewpoints on the appropriate planning initiatives for rural subdivision. One purpose of this chapter is to show how the objectives have been met.

The review of the literature in Chapters 2 and 3 identified a number of important background points. Subdivision has occurred throughout New Zealand's history of European land settlement, but lifestyle subdivision has been particularly evident during the 1960s through to the present. Demand for rural subdivision blocks is especially high in areas surrounding cities. Latest figures continue to indicate significant demand for country living. The Selwyn District provides a good example of an area where the level of rural subdivision has increased significantly in recent years.

Lifestyle block purchasers exhibit a number of distinctive characteristics. They tend to be relatively affluent as a group, with many falling into the child rearing stage of life. Lifestyle, rather than monetary purposes is a primary aim of moving to the country with many continuing to maintain employment away from their properties. Financial reasoning
appears to be the main justification as to why traditional farmers choose to subdivide their farms.

Although subdivision of farmland creates both positive and negative impacts, the negative impacts, from the point of view of the farmer, are frequently reported to outweigh the positive consequences. Loss of land from agricultural production is a significant issue raised within the literature. The break up of farmland also places pressure upon the farming activities of those continuing to farm in areas where it occurs. The main issue of contention is that newcomers appear to wish to impose urban standards on the existing farming community.

Despite the presence of the RMA (1991) for eight years, many local authorities have continued to implement traditional zoning based approaches that were characteristic of the prior legislation controlling subdivision, the TCPA (1977). In the Selwyn District, there exists a degree of uncertainty over rural subdivision policy due to the retraction of the Proposed District Plan. However, at this stage it seems likely that subdivision for lifestyle purposes will be restricted to occur around the perimeters of existing townships.

The Selwyn District provides a case study to interpret the experiences and responses of farmers to rural subdivision. A narrative approach has been used to interpret the accounts of 42 farmers in the District obtained from qualitative in-depth interviews. Such an approach has enabled farmers' viewpoints of rural subdivision to be compared and contrasted, as well as providing a useful tool to assign meaning to the experiences and responses of the farmers. Five key themes arose from the interview data and were presented in Chapter 5:

1) The Economics of Agriculture;
2) Selwyn District Council Policy;
3) Soil and Production;
4) The Advantages and Disadvantages of Rural Subdivision;

These themes form the basis of the following discussion.

6.3 Discussion of Themes

The key questions to answer now are: How do the themes that have emerged from the interviews relate to the different situations of the farmers? Do any overarching patterns, or

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1The order in which these themes are listed does not imply that one theme is more important than another. The themes are ordered in a logical manner with the themes common to both subdividers and those farmers continuing to farm (the non-subdividers) listed first.
common narratives occur? Table 6.1 provides a summary of the themes in relation to the farmer group that held these particular views. Of note is that six themes are shown in the table, although only five were listed in Chapter 5. This occurs as the theme of advantages and disadvantages is broken into two categories to more easily show which farmer groups expressed these matters.

Three groups of farmers are identified in the table. They include the subdividers (farmers who had or whom are currently subdividing) and the non-subdividers. The non-subdivider farming group is further divided into two categories, those who have not ruled out the possibility of subdividing their farms, but are not presently subdividing (the potential subdividers), and those that consider that they would never subdivide their farms (the never subdividers). As indicated in Table 6.1, eight farms fell into the subdivider category, 13 farms into the potential subdivider category and four farms into the never subdivider category.

Table 6.1: The Themes Expressed by the Three Farmer Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>FARMER GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUBDIVIDERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A decline in the profitability of agriculture</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selwyn District Council policy needs improvement</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production falls with rural subdivision</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural subdivision creates advantages</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural subdivision creates disadvantages</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestylers do not participate in the community and are not successful land managers</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ** a dominant theme
* the theme was mentioned
gap the theme was either not mentioned at all or was not particularly significant

Two asterisk groupings are shown in Table 6.1. A double set of asterisks has been used to represent themes that were dominant in the accounts of a farmer group, while an individual asterisk signifies that this theme was mentioned by the group but to a much lesser extent. The gaps indicate that the theme in question was not significant in the accounts of the farmer group. The table presents an overall 'picture' by showing generalisations regarding which farmer group expressed each theme. Each theme is now discussed and detail is provided for each farmer group. Also noted are the groups of farmers that did not express
such ideas, as demonstrated by the two gaps that exist in Table 6.1. Of note is that although the non-subdivider category consists of two farmer groupings, potential and never subdividers, they are mainly discussed together as there was no significant variation in their accounts of rural subdivision.

Table 6.1 shows that there are two themes which are common to all of the farmer groups. This is indicated by the predominance of double asterisks for the first two themes depicted in the table. These are that there is a decline in the profitability of agriculture and that policy of the Selwyn District Council as it relates to rural subdivision needs improvement. Although all of the farmer groups have expressed viewpoints on the advantages and disadvantages of rural subdivision, there was significant variance in terms of the extent to which the farmer groups emphasised these themes. Thus, such themes have not been classed as shared themes. This matter is clarified in the discussion that follows.

Almost all of the farmers, both subdividers and non-subdividers considered that farming was not particularly profitable. Few farmers anticipated a significant improvement in the future. This trend was apparent for nearly all farmer 'types' including sheep, cropping, cattle, dairy, pig and horse farmers. The reasons given included a rising cost for the necessary inputs to produce from the land and the perceived need for a much larger area of land to achieve financial success. It was also noted that the prices farmers received for their produce have not risen to cover increasing farming costs. Only one asterisk is given for the never subdivider group to represent their opinion upon the profitability of agriculture. This occurs as two of the farming families that fell into this category were chicken farmers who considered that they were performing quite well in financial terms.

The accounts of farmers, both subdividers and non-subdividers, further show that both groups expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with Council policy regarding rural subdivision. However, it was the subdividers that were often more vocal regarding this matter. Most likely, this was due to their first hand experience of the resource consent and hearing processes. An additional factor that is also likely to have influenced the viewpoints of both farmer groups was the fact that the Selwyn District Council was experiencing a period of upheaval due to the withdrawal of its Proposed District Plan (see Chapter 3). Therefore, the responses and experiences of farmers in the Selwyn District must be considered in this context. This may provide some explanation as to why it was generally expressed that the Council's approach to rural subdivision planning was rather shambolic.

The results suggest there are certain aspects of Council policy that farmers considered could be addressed or refined. Of prominence was the issue of lifestyle block sizing. However, this issue was mainly expressed by those farmers continuing to farm in the District (the non-subdividers). It was generally agreed by such farmers that lifestyle blocks should not be too large. The rationale being, the larger the block, the more time, capital investment and work required by the lifestylers to farm the block. According to the farmers,
particularly those continuing to farm in the District, lifestylers were often tired due to full-time employment away from their lifestyle blocks, and frequently found the work required to operate and maintain their properties very demanding. In some situations, lifestylers lacked the equipment and knowledge to farm their blocks. This led many farmers to suggest that smaller blocks of perhaps several hectares were more suited to the requirements of lifestylers. The implications of this finding are discussed later in this chapter.

For the remainder of the themes identified in the table (see Table 6.1) differences are evident in the accounts of the farmer groups. The main contrast occurs in the accounts of the subdividing versus the non-subdividing farmers. These differences are now discussed.

Those farmers categorised as subdividers tended not to acknowledge that rural subdivision could result in a loss of production, (as demonstrated by the gap in this section of Table 6.1). Instead, they often provided examples where lifestylers had improved production levels and income derived from land previously operated as a traditional farm. This finding is not particularly surprising and most probably occurred as they felt the need to focus upon the positive aspects of subdividing, in order to provide a degree of justification for their action. Their emphasis tended to be upon the new and diverse land uses subdivision could potentially bring.

In contrast, many of the non-subdividing farmers expressed a sadness over the loss of good productive land to farming, with the advent of lifestyle subdivision. This is indicated by the double asterisks shown in this category of Table 6.1. Such farmers perceived that production levels fell with farmland subdivision. However, not all non-subdividing farmers considered loss of production as a concern. A few reasoned that it was an unfair, selfish viewpoint, and that people other than just conventional farmers should be given the opportunity to use the land. Many of the accounts, particularly those of non-subdividing farmers, emphasised the issue of 'heavy' soils versus 'light' soils. They considered that if subdivision was to occur, it was more appropriate upon 'lighter' farming land, which tends to be less fertile, drought prone, and therefore not particularly suitable for traditional grazing, cropping or dairying. This finding suggests that if the land is not suited for conventional agricultural pursuits then it seems farmers are more likely to consider that lifestyle blocks are an appropriate use.

There was a notable difference in the variety and degree to which advantages and disadvantages were emphasised by the farmer groups. Most farmers considered that rural subdivision brought both advantages and disadvantages (refer Table 6.1). However, the positive aspects of rural subdivision tended to be more readily expressed by subdividing farmers while it was the negative impacts that were emphasised by the non-subdividing farmers. The positive aspects recounted by the subdividing farmers included benefits to local schools and businesses, and most probably occurred as a justification for why they...
were undertaking the activity of subdivision. Other advantages identified included labour provision, leasing, grazing and opportunities to make silage and hay. In general, such examples were not considered to be very significant. The non-subdividers, while recognising that these impacts had occurred, did not consider that they were particularly advantageous to their farming activity.

However, one consistently shared advantage for all farmer groups was the potential financial benefits to the farmer created through rural subdivision. It was admitted by subdividers that it provided a means to recover debt or to expand their farming operations. The non-subdividing farmers recognised that subdivision occurring near their farms increased the values of their properties and that if they chose to subdivide, providing the Council allowed, they would stand to gain substantially in financial terms.

There was a much greater emphasis on the disadvantages of rural subdivision by the non-subdividing farmers as is illustrated by the double asterisks shown in this category of Table 6.1. A wide variety of disadvantages were raised, ranging from complaints received about noise, livestock on the road, long grass on lifestyle blocks and a rise in rates payable to the Council. Overall, in analysing the accounts of the farmers there was a much greater focus on the negative consequences of rural subdivision. This finding is elaborated further later in this chapter.

The final theme illustrated in Table 6.1 relates to perceptions of lifestylers by the farmers. Notably, it tended to be the non-subdividing farmers that were eager to express their viewpoints on the lifestylers and the activities of the lifestylers. The subdividers did not tend to say too much about the lifestylers. If they did, it tended to be framed in a positive manner, for example, potential community advantages, provision of an opportunity to develop new profitable enterprises, and to give families the opportunity to live in the country.

However, there were some shared views. Most farmers generally explained that lifestylers fell into the 30-50 year age category, often with children and both partners employed away from their properties in well paid professional occupations. Such perceptions closely meet with the characteristics reported in research such as Fairweather (1993), Meister and Knighton (1984) and Moran et al. (1980a). The large homes and often a show of wealth by the lifestylers was something that stood out in the observations of many farmers, even for those whom were subdividing. This could well be attributed to the fact that many of the homes the farmers referred to were relatively new, with landscaping in progress. Therefore, the properties were quite likely to be a prominent feature of the landscape.

The most significant response relating to lifestylers was the perception that lifestylers did not partake in the activities of rural communities to any great extent, or at least as much as farmers hoped they initially may. This theme was notably expressed by the non-
subdividers. Many further explained that in their experience, lifestylers were not particularly successful in terms of their achievements with their blocks of land, although there was the odd exception. In their view, lifestylers did not last for a significant period of time on their properties. However, it was explained that for some of the relatively recent lifestyle blocks it was too soon to provide comment.

In summary, this discussion of the themes expressed by the different farmer groups has revealed that farmers in the Selwyn District share viewpoints on the declining profitability of agriculture and opinions of their local authority. However, differences in the accounts of the subdividing and non-subdividing farmers are evident in relation to the social impacts of rural subdivision and the consequences it imposes for farming, in terms of changes to production and farming activity.

6.4 Interpreting the Themes: Does a Common Narrative Exist?

The above discussion of the themes revealed in the accounts of the farmers shows that there does not exist one coherent narrative of rural subdivision. There are both shared themes and conflicting themes. The shared narrative of farmers relates to the economic factors currently experienced within the agricultural sector, and how the Selwyn District Council has approached rural subdivision planning. The matters on which contrasting narratives are evident relate to the social issues and impacts on the activity of farming and rural land resulting through subdivision of farmland. This is evident in the accounts of the subdividing farmers versus the accounts of the farmers continuing to farm. Therefore, the results suggest that all of the farmers tell the same narrative regarding structural matters influencing rural subdivision, both economic and policy, while it is upon the more local scale that their narratives differ in terms of social issues and impacts upon the activity of farming and rural land. It seems that the main reason for a conflict in narrative is the position of the farming families. That is whether or not the farmers are currently subdividing or whether or not they are for the time being continuing to farm.

The most plausible explanation for the contrast in the accounts of the subdividing farmers when compared with the non-subdividing farmers, particularly in terms of the advantages and disadvantages expressed, is provided by the theory of rationalisation. At a basic level, to 'rationalise' can be thought of as to offer a coherent set of reasons as an explanation for particular events, behaviours or attitudes (Oxford University Press, 1991). To rationalise is therefore to make logical or consistent. Much has been written about rationalism in the social sciences. Broadly, it can be defined as knowledge derived from common sense, reason and logic (Landis, 1992).

A key theorist of rationalism is Max Weber (Collins 1986). Weber's interpretation of rationalisation has some parallels with what has occurred in the Selwyn District case study. In particular, Weber's mean/ends definition of rationalisation provides useful insight.
According to this definition "Rationality consists of a relationship between means and ends, such that the actor has chosen means that will actually lead to the consequences they desire. Rationality here means technically adequate calculation of how to get from point A to point B" (Collins, 1986:62). This definition suggests that farmers cite as reasons the means that lead to the outcome they desire. For example, the act of subdividing is rationalised through poor economic returns from farming. Subdivision provides a means to clear debt, develop the farm, to move elsewhere or to retire. The non-subdividing farmers also recognise that subdivision provides a means to deal with current economic circumstances. However, because they are not currently subdividing and have chosen to continue farming it is no surprise that their accounts focus on the disadvantages that rural subdivision can impose. Most likely this occurred as such farmers do not stand to gain a great deal until they actually undertake the activity of subdivision.

Overall, the accounts of almost all of the farmers have indicated a demise in the prosperity of the family farm. Rising costs and low returns have contributed to this outcome. Consequently, subdivision of the farm is perceived as a very timely option. As many of the farming families approach retirement, subdivision of the farm presents itself as a way out. It provides a means of recuperating what the farmers have put into their farms in terms of finance, effort, time and sacrifice.

Although many farming families acknowledged that the subdivision of their farms would eventually be a difficult decision, financial matters at the end of the day were given precedence in their accounts. This is illustrated by the fact that of the 25 farms included in the research, eight were in the process of subdivision (some blocks having already been sold). Of the 17 farms still presently farmed, the farmers of 13 considered subdivision as a potential option. Of the remaining four (the never subdividers) two reasoned that their holdings were too small to be subdivided. Thus, it was only the remaining two farm families that were adamant they would not like to see their farms subdivided. Interestingly, both of the farming couples that exhibited this viewpoint went a step further by stating that it did not mean that their children would not do so. Thus, at the end of the day, their farms may also eventually be subdivided.

Despite the farmers recounting somewhat conflicting narratives about the benefits and problems subdivision brought to the land, rural communities and farming activities (subdividers versus non-subdividers) it seems that, particularly for farmers presently farming, they had not actually been prevented from undertaking their business of farming. They too, when the decision was made to eventually leave the land, would not hesitate to subdivide their farms.
6.5 Other Issues

This section interprets other issues that have arisen in the farmers' accounts by comparing them with the literature. Both the literature reviewed previously as well as some further literature is used to aid interpretation. The following issues are discussed in this section: the existence of the pastoral ethic; a focus on the disadvantages resulting from subdivision of farmland; and a lack of interaction between lifestylers and existing rural communities.

6.5.1 The Existence of the Pastoral Ethic

A dominant underlying belief in the accounts of many of the farmers was that production levels achieved from the land fell with the advent of rural lifestyle subdivision. The belief that production attained from the land is important, expresses what Moran (1989) has termed the pastoral ethic. This ethic suggests that farmers value highly the productive capacity of land, and it is argued that this is characteristic of many traditional farmers. Therefore, the fact that many farmers considered falling production levels to be a disadvantage of subdivision was not unexpected. The literature shows that loss of productive agricultural soil has been an important component of New Zealand's rural planning legislation TCPA (1953) and (1977) and a prominent issue of contention in much of the research that has occurred on rural subdivision in New Zealand (Bradley, 1980; Lawn et al., 1979; Meister and Knighton, 1984; Moran et al., 1980d).

Productionist arguments for protection of farmland are also prevalent in other parts of the world, notably North America (Bunce, 1998). Such arguments suggest the conversion of farmland for non-agricultural purposes such as the building of a home, automatically threaten food production. However, the credibility of such arguments have lessened as it has come to be realised that it is not a shortage of land that is a threat to agriculture but rather, overproduction and global competition (Bunce, 1998). In Western Europe, a shortage of land for production is not a major concern but rather the activity of modern agriculture itself (Shoard, 1985 cited in Bunce, 1998).

Other literature also supports the importance of the pastoral ethic in farmers' attitudes, with authors such as Bull et al. (1988), Lapping et al. (1989) and Sanders (1977) suggesting the productive capacity of land is important to the farmer, largely due to the benefits it provides to their activity of farming. Therefore, the fact that many farmers exhibited this viewpoint is not remarkable. Spaling and Wood (1998) also acknowledge the existence of this land based ethic where land is valued as a resource for the food and fibre it produces, terming it a 'biocentric' ethic. However, they also discuss that there exist other ethics in terms of how farmland is valued. These include, an economic perspective and a moral and religious perspective (econocentric and theocentric ethics respectively). In their research in Canada they conclude that the ethic categories are not exclusive and that the decisions of farmers in
relation to changing land uses usually consist of a combination of such ethics. The farmers that participated in this research also appear to value land through a combination of such ethics. They do not favour what subdivision supposedly does to the land in terms of loss of production, while at the same time they are content with the financial rewards subdivision of their farms can bring.

Although the pastoral ethic was apparent in the accounts of the farmers, (notably the non-subdividers), their concern over a loss in production occurring through subdivision may be unfounded. The majority of the rural subdivision research undertaken in New Zealand from the late 1970s through to the 1990s suggests that production levels on average actually increase, although initially production may decline as a new enterprise is established (Mears, 1974; Meister and Knighton, 1984; Peacocke, 1997). Nevertheless, many farmers seemed to base their viewpoints on their own observations, often explaining that they were aware of a lifestyle block that in their opinion was not utilised to its full potential. To give any weighting to this opinion it is necessary for detailed research to be undertaken regarding this matter, specifically, production levels achieved from lifestyle blocks in the Selwyn District. It could well be that many lifestyle blocks in the Selwyn District are in fact not utilised to their full potential.

6.5.2 A Focus on the Disadvantages Resulting From Subdivision of Farmland

In section 6.3 it was noted that on the whole there was a greater focus by the farmers on the disadvantages that both have and could occur through the subdivision of farmland. This result was not particularly surprising as much of the literature and anecdotal evidence reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 suggested that generally farmers as a group appear to be frustrated, often exhibiting a degree of animosity over the occurrence of rural subdivision and the influx of lifestylers into their farming communities (Daniels, 1997; Gee, 1998; Grigg, 1984; Henshall Momsen, 1984; Lundy, 1996; Mair, 1998b). This emphasis upon the negative consequences of subdivision reinforces the study by Talbot (1996) who found that a much greater proportion of impacts that occurred through rural subdivision were perceived as negative than positive (69 percent versus 29 percent).

Despite the tendency of many of the farmers interviewed to focus on the disadvantages of rural subdivision, ranging from difficulties shifting livestock along roads, complaints about noises and odour, to disturbances by dogs, the occurrence of these impacts was not as frequent as some of the literature and anecdotal evidence suggested. Many farmers stressed that the occurrence of lifestyle subdivision had not impacted upon their farming practices to any great extent. However, there existed the potential for impacts to exacerbate if subdivision of farmland in the District continued at the present level. Some disadvantages such as damming of stock water races, water shortages, and the risk of fire in long grass were most likely more prominent in the accounts of farmers due to the prevailing drought conditions.
6.5.3 A Lack of Interaction Between Lifestylers and Existing Rural Communities

Many farmers noted that interaction between lifestylers and the existing rural communities was minimal. However, the lack of interaction was not regarded as a problem. The fact that many lifestylers did not mix with rural communities could be simply because they did not wish to do so. The research reviewed in Chapter 2 found most purchasers of small blocks of land continued to maintain off-farm employment (Fairweather, 1993; Moran et al., 1980c; O'Connell, 1986) largely as a means of supporting their lifestyles. Some research, for instance, Lawn et al. (1979) and Moran et al. (1980b) also found that lifestylers often retained their town connections and activities. The farmers have suggested that this is occurring within the Selwyn District. Such a finding reinforces Swaffield and Fairweather's (1998) conclusion that New Zealand lifestylers were not searching for a place in a pre-established rural community.

Several farmers that had attempted to befriend their new neighbours had been informed by the newcomers that that is why a shift from the city had occurred, to avoid pestering neighbours. This lends support to the finding of Fairweather (1996) in relation to intending smallholders around Christchurch, that a lack of nearby neighbours was an important decision in purchasing a small block of land. There existed a desire to be isolated from other people. The absence of neighbours was also found to be important to existing owners of smallholding properties.

The lack of interaction between existing farmers and the lifestylers does not support the findings of earlier research by Meister and Knighton (1984). Their research concluded that blockholders took an active involvement in the activities of the communities into which they moved. Generally, they contributed to the life of the community, providing benefits to local services and bringing social diversity to the community. This was not though what the farmers explained was occurring in the Selwyn District.

If it is true then that lifestylers are not mixing with rural communities, one needs to ask why. The farmers themselves provided reasons such as tiredness on the part of the lifestylers and lack of prior knowledge of the amount of work necessary to operate a small farm. The lack of interaction could quite plausibly be attributed to preconceived ideas about rural communities and individuals by the lifestylers. For example, that rural communities are backward (Bonner, 1997), conservative (Lapping et al., 1989) or close-knit (Pacione, 1984). Perhaps lifestylers did not wish to be a part of this or found it difficult to fit into an established community.

Fairweather's (1993) study of existing and intending smallholders around Christchurch provides some insight into perceptions of rural communities by lifestylers. The q-sort data is particularly relevant as it involved a list of 33 statements about urban and rural attitudes. In reference to the intending smallholder group, it was found that statements relating to the
negative components of rurality were strongly disagreed with. Neutral scores were given to
statements that reflected positive values of rurality. This showed that intending
smallholders did not place high values on the social aspects of rural community life or
perceive it as remarkably distinctive from urban life. Existing smallholders were also given
the same statements. However, some differences were found in the q-sort data obtained
from the intending and existing smallholders. The main contrast was that existing
smallholders gave higher ratings to some aspects of positive rurality. Of particular note was
that the aspects of rural communities such as friendliness, neighbourliness, close-knit
families and the belief that rural life brings out the best in people were not rated as highly.
From this finding it was concluded that the more idealised characteristics of living in a
rural environment are rejected to some extent after living on a smallholding. Therefore, this
suggests that smallholders do not perceive rural communities to be that different from
urban communities.

6.6 Implications of the Research

The results of this thesis have a number of implications in terms of their contribution to the
body of knowledge that exists on farm structure, to the development of planning policy on
rural subdivision at both the micro and macro levels, and to the methodology of rural
resource studies. They are now discussed.

6.6.1 Structural Implications:

Farming in the Selwyn District
The results confirm that for the moderate sized family farm, farmers believe that it has
become increasingly difficult to achieve good economic returns from traditional farming
pursuits. Thus, for many farming families who live in areas such as Selwyn on the
periphery of a city, subdivision is a very attractive economic option. Farms located further
from the city environment tend not to have the same option due to their distance from
employment centres.

If the farmers in this case study do as they have suggested and eventually subdivide their
farms, it could well mean that the number of farms and average farm size in the Selwyn
District will alter. There will be a greater number of smaller farms located within the
District. However, this will be largely influenced by the policy that forms the new District
Plan. The possible removal of lifestyle subdivision as an option for major productive zones
could well mean subdivision does not occur to the extent it has in recent times. Farmers
that have already subdivided their farms 'on paper' will of course still be permitted to sell
the various titles that constitute their farms.
The Future of the Family Farm as a Unit of Production

There are also broader implications for the viability of the family farm as a unit of production. Globally, the traditional model of the family farm within developed industrial societies has been subject to significant changes in recent times. Such changes have included an increase in size, the need for off-farm income to remain economically viable, demographic changes within the family unit itself, and the departure of some farmers completely from farming (Francis, 1994). These changes have been heightened by technical modifications within agriculture, including improvements in technology and increased specialisation and commercialisation (Rogers et al., 1988). New Zealand agriculture has not been exempt from such changes, with fluctuating markets and withdrawal of government support (Le Heron et al., 1992). Further, decreasing profitability from traditional agricultural pursuits has meant that farming has become less attractive to the children of farming families (Bosworth, 1992; Taylor and Little, 1995; Ward and Lowe, 1994). As a consequence, succession of the family farm is no longer encouraged by many farming parents.

This situation presents farmers with a dilemma. That is, should they make economically risky decisions to enable them to retain their family connections with the land, which may have existed for several generations, or take the safer option and sell the farm to alleviate debt and exit with their capital? The decision can be difficult, as there exist two different but overlapping systems of values operating within the family farm. On the one hand, there exist family values such as history, relationships, loyalties, expectations and obligations, while on the other hand, there exists the business component of the family farm. This includes economic decisions and actions (Rosenblatt, 1990). The results of this case study have suggested that loyalties to the family farm may not be as significant in the decisions of the farming families as might have been supposed. Rather, farmers are choosing to respond to changing market conditions. The economic choice of subdivision provides an opportunity to do so. Subdivision is not causing farmers to sell their farms, but certainly reinforces the process, by enabling farmers to exit from farming with their capital. Therefore, this occurrence could well indicate that the family farm (particularly in the parts of the District within commuting distance to places of employment) could become a less prominent feature in Selwyn.

The Role of Subdivision in Promoting Efficient Land Use

The responses of farmers in this case study have suggested that subdivision has and will provide agriculture with a means of responding to changing market conditions. It enables farmers to exit with their capital, whether it be to retire, farm elsewhere, expand, diversify or leave farming altogether. At the same time, it provides the opportunity for non-farm people to experience life in the country and set up a diversity of economic enterprises. The land is not lost to farming, although the use to which it is put may change. Subdivision arguably, therefore, provides a tool to help farmers achieve 'market' efficiency. It recognises that the rural economy is both changing and diverse.
However, there exists some debate over whether subdivision is in fact an 'efficient' use of land (McShane, 1998; Upton, 1995). The main contention is that through subdivision, land is lost to agriculture, particularly as a resource for food production, while choices in how land can be used by future generations are lessened due to the increase in real estate value that tends to be associated with smaller lots. Consequently, many local authorities have implemented policy that limits subdivision. This raises significant questions, particularly as it was the intention of the RMA to facilitate the performance of the market and only intervene where necessary to control environmental effects (this matter is elaborated further under the policy implications section below).

The Question of Whether Subdivision Inhibits the Efficiency of Adjacent Farming Operations

One of the more contentious aspects of rural subdivision is the potential for a 'culture clash', between farmers and incomers. Furthermore, it has been claimed in some high profile situations that the presence of increased numbers of ex-urban lifestylers in production areas actually inhibits existing farm operations. There is little evidence from the farmers' accounts that this is in fact the case. Although there appears to be conflicts of perception and values, the farmers interviewed did not identify any significant ways in which the presence of lifestylers actually inhibited their farming. The conflict was more one of values and expectations, rather than any physical or legal constraints on farming activities.

6.6.2 Policy Implications:

The Selwyn District

In pragmatic terms therefore the results show that the occurrence of rural subdivision in the vicinity has not prevented farmers from undertaking their activity of farming. However, farmers have expressed concern that farming may become more difficult as subdivision of farmland continues within the District. As urban dwellers move into rural areas, their awareness may therefore need to be heightened of the activities characteristic of the rural environment and their potential effects. Thus, there exists a role for local authorities to educate purchasers and developers of lifestyle blocks about the potential 'pitfalls' often characteristic of the rural environment. There exists an opportunity to do this when such individuals apply for resource and building consents. The very nature of agriculture in terms of production of livestock and crops mean that there will inevitably be some form of output which in some instances may be unpleasant. At the same time, there exists a role for the farming community to be more considerate in their activities, for example, in terms of livestock droving, spraying and stubble burning. For the time being, farmers farming near concentrations of lifestyle blocks will have to think twice about farming activities that once may have been taken for granted.
The farmers' accounts have also suggested that the sizing of lifestyle blocks is an important issue that requires further consideration. In recognition that there does exist a demand for country living most farmers consider that small blocks of only several hectares are more suited to the needs of lifestylers. This is one matter that current consultation activity in the District is investigating and that should be addressed in the formation of the new District Plan. From a planning perspective, limitations on the sizing of lifestyle blocks presents both advantages and disadvantages. Large blocks tend to lessen the likelihood of cross boundary conflict between neighbours and arguably provide the owner with a much greater choice in terms of how the land can be used. In contrast, smaller blocks tend to provide less choice in terms of how the land can be used. A restriction on the sizing of blocks also raises questions in terms of the possible environmental effects (i.e. environmental effects such as those resulting from septic tanks, have less of an area to be spread across). However, if small blocks are in fact located together, an opportunity does exist to share infrastructure such as sewer schemes.

Further, it seems that most of the farmers (the non-subdividers) think that eventually when a decision is made to retire they will have the option of subdividing their farms. Although there exists a degree of uncertainty over rural subdivision policy in the Selwyn District, it is likely that policy adopted will become more restrictive. Most likely, subdivision will be rezoned to occur on the perimeters of existing townships. If this does occur it could well mean that many farmers in the District will be disappointed if they do not have the option to subdivide. However, whether or not the farmers that took part in this research will be granted permission to subdivide will depend very much upon the policy of the day when the decision to subdivide is eventually made. This could be anywhere over the next 25 year period or more.

The Resource Management Act (1991)
As noted in Chapter 2, the RMA (1991) at the time of writing is under review. A significant proposed amendment relates to how 'environment' should be defined within the Act (MfE, 1998). The present definition of environment is very broad. It is proposed that both the economic and social components of the definition be removed. The present inclusion of economic and social considerations in the Act's definition of environment has meant that all manner of adverse economic and social effects have been able to be considered in decisions made under the Act. An amendment to the definition would give a much greater emphasis to effects upon the natural and physical environment. Such an amendment has implications in terms of rural subdivision policy within the Selwyn District.

This research has revealed that farmers place significant emphasis upon how rural subdivision influences their farming activity and social matters. Their accounts have placed much less emphasis on the impacts upon the natural and physical environment. If the definition of environment is indeed narrowed, social concerns will no longer be taken into
consideration to the same extent in environmental decisions made under the RMA (1991). If this does occur, it raises questions, particularly in terms of how the Selwyn District Council will be able to justify restricting the occurrence of rural subdivision in the District. That is, if the Council is no longer required to consider social effects, while if the effects upon the natural and physical environment are as minimal as the farmers' accounts have suggested, there exist no reasons to limit subdivision in the major productive areas of the District. If the Council does intend to implement policy that restricts subdivision, it will have to focus on the effects of subdivision upon the natural and physical environment. However, this may be difficult, as from earlier discussion it has been stated that subdivision itself does not create an environmental effect, but rather, they occur through the subsequent use to which the land is put (McShane, 1998; Upton, 1995). Such a finding therefore lends support to the market based approach that some authors have argued should influence how rural land is used. A market based approach would enable farmers to respond to changes within the rural economy as most farmers in this case study have expressed they wish to do.

6.6.3 Methodological Implications:

The Theory of Narrative

It was not a primary intention of this research to significantly extend or develop a new means of undertaking research in the field of rural resource studies. Rather, the research aimed to implement an approach that enabled a richness and depth in terms of what farmers were thinking and saying about rural subdivision to be expressed. In-depth interviews were adopted and interpreted using the theory of narrative to achieve this aim. Nonetheless, the research provides an applied example of how narrative theory can be used to help understand a rural social phenomenon and adds to the body of research within the social sciences that is increasingly using narrative as a legitimate means of understanding complex social issues.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis has highlighted several topics relating to rural subdivision worthy of further research. The narratives of the farmers raise questions about how other members of rural communities such as business people and residents perceive rural subdivision. A study of the viewpoints of the 'lifestylers' of the Selwyn District would provide a useful comparison of farmer viewpoints presented in this thesis. Particularly, their opinions on how existing farming activities influence their lifestyles and the policy initiatives they perceive to be necessary to derive a degree of compromise.

Further, a study comparing rural subdivision in Selwyn with other New Zealand districts, with a focus upon how farmers in these districts have responded to the issue of rural subdivision would provide a much broader understanding of farmer experiences and responses in the wider New Zealand context. It would also be interesting to determine
whether or not younger farmers perceived the issue of rural subdivision differently from older farmers.

Lastly, it would be very worthwhile to undertake a follow-up study in the future of the farming families that participated in this research to discover what has become of their farms (perhaps in ten years time). For example, have their farms been subdivided, have they remained farming, have they retired, passed their farms onto their children, or sold their farm to another farmer? Such research will provide valuable knowledge and understanding of changes occurring within the rural sector and continue to add to the existing body of research on rural subdivision in New Zealand.

6.8 Conclusion

The primary objective of this thesis was to identify farmer perspectives upon rural subdivision and develop an understanding of farmers' experiences and responses to this phenomenon. Therefore, it is appropriate in concluding the thesis to reflect upon the enhanced understanding of rural subdivision that has been gained through this case study of Selwyn District farmers. In particular, the insight that this thesis contributes to the body of existing research and knowledge of rural subdivision in New Zealand.

It is apparent that for many farmers, eventual subdivision of the family farm is perceived as a necessary financial option. Given current agricultural economic conditions, subdivision of the family farm presents itself as a practical alternative to economically marginal farming. However, it must be emphasised that it still remains only an option for most. For the time being the majority of farmers in this case study are continuing to farm their farms.

There exists some contention over the advantages and disadvantages expressed by the farmers resulting from subdivision of farmland, particularly in terms of social impacts, changes to production levels and upon farming activities. The contention exists notably in the accounts of the subdividing farmers versus the non-subdividing farmers. However, the case study has shown that it is very much the result of circumstantial factors: that is, whether or not the farmers are subdividing or continuing to farm. Subdividing farmers on the whole have tended to express rural subdivision in a positive manner while non-subdividing farmers tend to express it with a greater degree of negativity.

The occurrence of rural subdivision has not prevented farmers from performing their day-to-day farming activities. It is clear that the occurrence of subdivision in the rural environment is not occurring solely because people wish to escape the urban environment. Farmers are willingly deciding to make their farms available for subdivision. Subdivision of the family farm provides a means of exit given current economic conditions experienced within the agricultural sector. It emphasises the continuing integration of urban and rural sectors within the current open market in New Zealand.
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**Personal Communications**


You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled Rural Subdivision: A Case Study of Farmers' Accounts of Rural Subdivision in the Selwyn District.

The aim of this research is to find out the experiences and responses of farmers to the phenomenon of rural subdivision.

Your participation in the project will involve an in-depth interview. This could take from 1 to 1 and a ½ hours of time. The interview will be loosely structured involving a set of topics about farming and rural subdivision aimed to determine your perceptions upon the issue of rural subdivision.

The results of the research will be used as the basis of a Master of Resource Studies thesis. You may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public without their consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality the names of participants will not be recorded on interview transcripts. False names will be used in the write up of the research.

The research is being carried out by Karyn Lee who can be contacted at 3295- 696. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Subjects Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely

Karyn Lee
CONSENT FORM

Rural Subdivision: A Case Study of Farmers' Accounts of Rural Subdivision in the Selwyn District

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Signed: __________ & __________ Date: __________
INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTRODUCTION
-explain what the research is about (experiences and responses of farmers to the phenomenon of rural subdivision in the Selwyn District)
explain how the data will be used (thesis, 25 farming families)
-explain format of interview (interview guide, opportunity for own questions, comments)
-issue of confidentiality, signing of consent form

FARM DETAILS
-size
-owner/manager?
details of what produce
-number of years farming farm
-number of years living in the district/on the farm
-future plans for the farm

PERSONAL DETAILS
-reasons for farming
-reasons for farming where are now (what like/dislike about where are farming)
age/partner details
-background (urban/rural)
-family details (number of children, what they do, likelihood of taking on the farm?)

RURAL SUBDIVISION
Explain what I am talking about (the break up of farmland into smaller blocks, primarily for lifestyle purposes. Interested in the impacts of rural subdivision and reasons for its occurrence).

1) How do you/(both) feel about rural subdivision?

2) What advantages does rural subdivision bring to the community?
   -to you as a farming family?
   -to your farming activity?/farming in general?
   -to other farmers?

3) What disadvantages does rural subdivision bring to the community?
   -to you as a farming family
   -to your farming activity?/farming in general?
   -to other farmers?
4) What do you think about the way in which the Selwyn District Council has handled the issue of rural subdivision? - good/bad?/suggestions.

5) What are the future plans for your farm?

6) Is subdivision an option? Why/why not?

7) Do you feel sentimental about your farm?

8) Perceptions of lifestylers - characteristics, observations, experiences? - interaction with lifestyling neighbours?

9) Further comments

**TOPICS FOR SUBDIVIDING FARMERS**

1) Details of your subdivision (where, size, have you sold all of your blocks, full-time farmers nearby, other subdivision nearby?)

2) What were your reasons for subdividing your farm?

3) How long had you lived on the farm prior to subdivision?

4) Was the farm your primary source of income? why/why not?

5) Was the decision to subdivide difficult? why/why not?

6) Experiences with the Council

7) Pleased with outcome?

Further comments