

**Social Integration of Newcomers to a Rural Community:
The Case of Vegreville, Alberta**

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Social Integration of Newcomers into a Rural Community: The Case of Vegreville, Alberta

1. The Problem

Interest in the subject of social integration of urban migrants into rural communities developed as a result of the so called 'population turn around' phenomenon observed by rural sociologists in the 1970's. The focus of much of this research related to the direction of migration and factors associated with residential preference. Some of this research (Glasgow & Sofranko, 1980; Goudy, 1990; Reiger & Beegle, 1974; Stinner et al. 1990) examined the temporal aspects of relocation and social integration of the migrant in the new community. This issue has become increasingly important in the 1990's as businesses and government agencies explore the economic advantages of relocating their staff in small communities.

Vegreville, Alberta provided a case where the decentralization of a government facility (Alberta Environmental Research Centre) initiated a sudden influx of newcomers with the potential of a disruption of established institutions and the social structures in the community. The purpose of this research is to examine the process by which new residents integrated into the social structure of Vegreville.

2. Social Integration as a Process

Social integration is a

"dimension of assimilation, as defined by social contacts with natives of the new community. These include both formal participation (e.g., the joining of organizations) and informal activities (e.g., involvement in local affairs and activities and the making of friendships) whose direct effect might be to produce a social psychological anchorage in the larger community and identity as a member of it." (Rieger and Beegle, 1974:44)

The typology¹ implied by the above definition serves as a classification scheme when examining variables involved in the establishment of new social networks following migration. Some

¹ A typology refers to the classification of nominal observations in terms of their attributes on two or more variables (Babbie, 1989:G8). Typologies may be used to form parts of theories. The most common examples used are Durkheim's types of social organization (mechanical and organic) used in his theory of the division of labour.

researchers, such as Brown et al. (1989) and Goudy (1990) have examined integration in relation to community attachment as they perceived the two as analogous in the assimilation process following migration.

Research into community attachment by Stinner et al. (1990) contributed to an understanding of social integration as a social phenomenon. They acknowledged that there were "behavioral, structural and perceptual linkages of individuals to their community of residence" (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974:495; Goudy, 1990). Stinner et al. identified two concepts related to social integration. These were *involvement*, the participation in the community field; and *amity*, the degree to which the individuals become involved in the local friendship structures.

The study of social integration includes variables which contribute either negatively or positively to an individual becoming socially established in the community. Temporal factors are considered the most important indicators of integration although the outcome of the process reflects characteristics of the newcomers and long-term residents. While length of time has been identified as the most important indicator (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Rieger & Beegle, 1974; Goudy, 1990) other variables of importance are the similarity between personal characteristics of the newcomer and long-term residents and the level of local social interaction desired by the newcomer. As well, there is a cyclical element to social participation, in that it increases over the first few years the individual resides in the community and then declines to a *maintenance* level for the long-term.

2.1 Social Networks in Rural Communities

Friendship networks and their density are related most strongly to the length of residence in a community, with personal characteristics being the second most important factor. Due to personal characteristics people utilize different sources for social contacts, consequently the rate for network development is subject to considerable variation. The rate of integration is also affected by the size of the community. Simmel (1902) and Wirth (1938) suggested that friendship networks are negatively impacted by increasing community size. They contended that social interaction with others, which occurs in urban settings, leads people to be more guarded in their personal relationships and encounters. Fischer (1982) did not agree. He noted that urban people, rather than being socially isolated were more involved with friends than rural people

were. This occurs because of a tendency to build friendship networks composed of people who share common characteristics and/or interests. A larger community offers a better environment for this, because as the number of potential contacts increases the probability of finding people with like interests and backgrounds increases.

In rural settings it appears likely that the nature of social networks are not substantially different from those in urban centres due to the influence of mass society. The importance of community size in rural areas is due to the limits it imposes on the number of potential social contacts and social opportunities. As a consequence, an individual who differs culturally or socially from the average resident of the community may have difficulties establishing local social networks which meet his or her desire for interaction.

2.2 Integration of Newcomers in a Community

Social integration examines social relationships a newcomer establishes following relocation in a new community. This is important because a low level of integration can lead to the social alienation of newcomers and/or long-term residents (Rank and Voss, 1982:198). According to Glasgow and Sofranko (1980), if the newcomer does not establish social linkages in the new community the probability of leaving increases. Not only is this detrimental to the migrants, but the receiving community fails to benefit from the skills and expertise of these people.

Rank and Voss (1982:199) raised a number of questions related to social integration and community involvement which were considered appropriate for research on the integration of newcomers in a rural community.

1. "Do newcomers identify with and contribute to their new places of residence?"
2. "What, if any, differences exist between the patterns of community involvement by recent migrants and longer-term residents ("old-timers")?"
3. "What are the consequences of involvement at both the individual level and community level?"

(Rank and Voss, 1982:199)

These questions imply that social interaction between newcomers and long-term residents is a necessary component in the integration process. Taking this into consideration, strategies used by newcomers to interact with other community residents and to gain social acceptance were of interest in this study of Vegreville, Alberta.

2.3 Factors Affecting Social Integration

2.3.1 Life Cycle Factors

The age of the individual and stage in the family cycle are also determinants in the rate of social integration because they establish social priorities. While these two variables are considered separately in this research, they are not mutually exclusive. In general, people in the early stages of the family cycle are also those individuals who are younger adults. Taking this into consideration, both affect social opportunities available to the individual.

During formative years in the family cycle social contacts in the community may be limited to those in the workplace because time restrictions may reduce social interaction with other adults. Once children enter school there are more opportunities for the parents to become actively involved in organizations which impact on the social, educational and recreational well-being of their children. This is exemplified by participation in home and school type associations, sports activities and cultural programs (Stinner et al., 1990).

In the later stages of the family cycle the focus of interest, for the adult members of the family, changes. Once children have matured and become independent their parents are able to shift their social focus to their own needs and interests. In general, what is observed is that as people age, their involvement in informal social activities declines, although they may remain active in formal organizations.

2.3.2 Kin Relationships

The number of people known by an individual in the community is affected, among other factors, by the number of relatives a person has residing locally. The presence of kin affects both the diversity and the density of local friendship networks. Rieger and Beegle (1974) observed that as the number of local kin increased, the number of social interactions with non-kin decreased. Fischer's (1982) explanation for this is that kinship ties are maintained out of a sense

of obligation at the expense of other social contacts.

The number of kin living locally are affected by the personal characteristics and career aspirations of the individual. As the socio-economic status of the individual increases, he/she would be less likely to reside in the same community as kin due to the availability of career enhancing opportunities elsewhere.

2.3.3 Other Socio-economic Variables

Socio-economic status has been used as an indicator of social integration. Research indicates that migrants of higher socio-economic status (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Goudy, 1990) adapt more readily in new social environments. This may be due, at least in part, to the reliance of high-status individuals on formal organizations to provide social contacts following migration (Goudy (1990). What has been observed is that these newcomers have more adaptive social skills than do other categories of migrants.

3. The Research Procedure

3.1 Research Objectives

Between 1976 and 1981 the community of Vegreville, Alberta experienced a rapid growth in its population due to the construction and opening of the Alberta Environmental Centre. During this period the population increased from 4,209 (1976) to 5,251 (1981). Not only did the community increase in size, but the diversity in personal characteristics of the residents increased.

This research explores the issues which contributed to the social integration of newcomers in Vegreville since 1981. Patterns of formal and informal interaction were examined in relation to intervening variables affecting the newcomers and oldtimers.

3.2 Procedures for Data Collection

To obtain data on the integration of newcomers to the community it was necessary to identify a large sample of newcomers. While a random sample of the town would provide a small portion, it was considered inadequate for the purposes of this research. To obtain the desired data it was determined that newcomers would need to be represented equally with long-term residents to provide sufficient data for quantitative analysis. This was accomplished by

taking a stratified random sample of individuals employed by the Alberta Environmental Centre to supplement a random sample of the community. Potential newcomers were identified using staff lists included in the Annual Reports, dating back to the opening of the Centre in 1980 through to, and including the 1989 Annual Report. Recipients of the self-administered questionnaire in the community at large were identified through a random sample of listings in the Vegreville telephone book.

The self-administered questionnaires were sent to 213 households in Vegreville. Two mailings resulted in the return of 119 completed questionnaires (a return rate of 55.9 percent). Twelve incomplete questionnaires were returned. Reasons given were moved, deceased, old age and poor understanding of English.

3.3 Study Variables

An examination of existing research indicated that four categories of variables should be included in this research. These were personal characteristics, friendship networks, social participation and use of community services. Data on personal characteristics of the respondents allowed for comparisons to be made between newcomers and long-term residents to determine whether the two groups were sufficiently different to affect social interaction between them. The geographical distribution, size of friendship networks, and local social participation (including the use of community services) were considered the primary indicators of social integration for both newcomers and long-term residents.

Data on personal characteristics were obtained using open-ended questions. The variables included the number of years residing in Vegreville, respondent age, years of education, post-secondary educational attainment, family size and household income.

Social interaction was measured using data collected on friendship networks and participation in local social activities. Several aspects of friendship networks were considered. The first of these, geographical location was used to determine where respondents did their socializing (in Vegreville or elsewhere) and consequently where they were likely to spend their leisure time. Geographically, friends were categorized as living in Vegreville, living outside of Vegreville but less than 30 miles away and friends living over 30 miles from Vegreville. Scaled responses were used to measure the density of the friendship networks from one to ten or more.

Participation in local activities and involvement in local organizations contributes to the integration of newcomers in a community. Organizations provide a structured setting in which people can meet others who share their interests. This study not only sought to obtain information on levels of participation, but also on the nature and scope of participative activities available to Vegreville residents.

4. Research Findings

Data obtained in Vegreville has been summarized here, including only the variables which proved to be indicators of social integration. The independent variables identified were personal characteristics, and the dependent variables were related to friendship networks and organizational participation.

4.1 Sample Characteristics

Data from Vegreville indicates that newcomers and long-term residents differ in sociological characteristics. Table 1 provides a summary of the information which will be discussed in this section.

A comparison of the population of Vegreville between 1976 and 1986 (based on the 1986 data from Statistics Canada) suggests that the age distribution in the community changed. This was most evident in the 20 through 55 year age cohorts. Between 1976 and 1986 the proportion of 20 through 35 year olds residents increased by 6.92 percent, with the most significant increase occurring between 1976 and 1981 (this may be explained by the aging of the local baby boom cohort and an influx of people in this age cohort). The proportion in the 35 through 54 age group also exhibited an increase (4.5 percent) between 1976 and 1986.

A decline was evident in proportion of the population between the ages of 55 and 65. While some of this may be attributed to mortality, out-migration may be a contributing factor, with individuals taking early retirement leaving Vegreville. The only segment of the population that remained relatively constant in proportion were the seniors (individuals over the age of 65), with little change indicated between 1976 and 1981.

Table 1. Comparison of Characteristics of Newcomers and Long-term Residents of Vegreville, Alberta, 1992

Variables	Newcomers n = 55	Long-term Residents n = 52
Age (mean)	44 years	53 years
Marital status (married)	71.2%	62%
Dependent children	45%	30.8%
Education (mean)	16.4 years	13.9 years
Income (mean)	\$55-60,000	\$35-40,000
Local kin (0-25%)	92.7%	51.9%
Local friends (many)	63.6%	76.9%
Distant friends (many)	61.8%	36.5%
Organization member	69.8%	84%
Very interested in the community	5.6%	32%
Spend most leisure time in community	54.9%	68.1%
Years residence (mean)	8.9 years	34 years

Based on Statistics Canada data (1986) 70 and 78 percent of the Vegreville population was less than 60 years of age. The sample population in this research indicated that 89.1 percent of newcomers and 59.6 percent of long-term residents were less than 60 years of age (significant at .05).

Differences in age distribution of the newcomers and long-term residents (Table 2) indicated that the in-migration which occurred in Vegreville in the past fifteen years was composed primarily of young adults and those in their middle years. In comparison, the sample of long-term residents of Vegreville indicated a bias toward senior age categories. The age distributions for newcomers and long-term residents suggested the exploration of integration issues which were subject to temporal effects.

Table 2. Age Distribution of Newcomers and Long-Term Residents (%)

Respondents' Age	Newcomers n = 55	Long-Term Residents n = 52	All Respondents n = 107
21 - 30 years	12.7%	17.3%	15.0%
31 - 40 years	25.5%	17.3%	21.5%
41 - 50 years	38.2%	15.4%	27.1%
51 - 60 years	12.7%	9.6%	11.2%
61 - 70 years	3.6%	11.5%	7.5%
71 - 80 years	1.8%	17.3%	9.3%
> 81 years	1.8%	9.6%	5.6%
No response	3.6%	1.9%	2.8%
Total	99.9%	99.9%	100.0%

Data from Vegreville indicated marital status, age and length of residence had the potential to affect social integration of newcomers into the existing social structure. According to the research 64.5 percent of the respondents were married. The largest proportion of these (31.9 percent) were between the ages of 41 and 60. Data obtained on family composition indicated that newcomers were more likely to have children living at home (45 percent) as compared to long-term residents (30.8 percent)². These findings reflect the larger proportion of newcomers who are younger adults (under 40 years of age).

The singles category was predominated by residents less than 40 years of age. The tendency for more newcomers to be married suggests that migration to Vegreville has been selective for young couples rather than young single adults. This being the case, it was assumed that relocating to Vegreville may have social barriers for certain categories of young adults. As Vegreville has been an agricultural and trade oriented community, selectivity may be against the in-migration of well educated singles (particularly females) if social participation and interaction is oriented to accomodate couples and families.

² Significant at .1.

The majority of the respondents (72.9 percent) indicated that they had very few members of their extended family (0-25 percent) living in or near Vegreville. A comparison of newcomers and long-term residents indicated that 92.7 percent of newcomers had fewer than 25 percent of their relatives living in or near Vegreville, while 51.9 percent of long-term residents indicated this same proportion. These data suggest that the presence of larger numbers of local kin would have a more significant effect on the development and diversity of local friendship networks for long-term residents than for newcomers, as time spent with kin limits time available for the formation of other social relationships.

Data from secondary sources indicated that, in Vegreville, the number of individuals who had completed post-secondary educational certificates increased between 1976 and 1981. This change may be attributed, at least in part, to the in-migration of personnel connected with the Alberta Environmental Research Centre. In 1976 there were 230 individuals with a post-secondary certificate as compared to 1981 when there were 320 (Statistics Canada, 1987(94-117):193). The number holding University degrees also increased, from 140 in 1976 to 275 in 1981 (Statistics Canada, 1987(94-117):193). These findings were supported by primary data in this research which indicated that 35.5 percent of the respondents had completed sixteen or more years of education (range 4-21 years). Differences between the levels of educational attainment for newcomers and long-term residents were significant. The means were 16.4 years of education for newcomers and 13.9 years of education for long-term residents (significant at .01). The differences may be explained in part by the average ages of newcomers and long-term residents, as there is a negative correlation between age and education, with older persons having fewer years of formal education.

The largest proportion of respondents with post-secondary education were in the 30-40 year age category, with 67.3 percent of these individuals having attended university. The highest overall level of educational attainment was in the 41-60 age group, which included most of the individuals who had earned their doctorates (18.6 percent of post-secondary graduates). A comparison of newcomer and long-term resident groups indicated that 65.6 percent of individuals with specialized post-secondary education were newcomers.

The breakdown of post-secondary qualifications by Statistics Canada in 1986 for Vegreville indicated that there was a disproportionate number of individuals with engineering and

related post-secondary education in comparison to other professions. Of the 1,285 individuals listed, 35 percent were in engineering related occupations (Table 3).

Household income, the last personal characteristic examined depends on two factors, the number of wage earners and the gross income of each wage earner. Data indicated that 41.1 percent of Vegreville respondents came from single income households and 39.3 percent from double income households (19.6 percent did not respond). A comparison of newcomers and long-term residents suggests a similar distribution of single and double income households, but newcomers on average have a higher household income than long-term residents. Personal characteristics such as age and education would be intervening variables.

Comparing the distribution of income in double and single wage earner households suggested similar patterns for both newcomers and long-term residents. Differences became evident when total household incomes were compared, with proportionally more newcomer households earning over \$60,000 per year. Long-term residents were more likely to have a single wage earner household and a household income of less than \$30,000 per year. This may be attributed to the number of seniors in this group.

The mean income for Vegreville residents was in the \$45,000 to \$50,000 range. A comparison of the mean income indicated that the mean was \$55-60,000 for newcomers and \$35-40,000 for long-term residents. The differences between the means were significant at .05.

4.2 Friendship Networks in Vegreville

The data from the sample populations indicated that the respondents did much of their socializing in Vegreville, with only .9 percent indicating that they did no socializing locally. 34.6 percent of respondents did some socializing locally, 50.5 percent indicated most, and 8.4 percent indicated that all of their socializing occurred in Vegreville.

Analysis of the data indicated that the respondents had extensive friendship networks in Vegreville with most respondents indicating many, rather than few local social contacts. When the size of local friendship networks was compared to the number of years of residence no significant difference was noted. Despite that, qualitative data suggested that some people established large networks of friends in a relatively short time, while others who have been in the community for a longer period of time still had small friendship networks.

The second group of social relationships examined were those within a 30 mile radius of Vegreville. Improvements to transportation have made it easier to visit and maintain close social relationships with people within this distance. This would include extended family members and friends. Respondents indicated that 37 percent of them had many friends living within this radius.

A comparison of the newcomer and long-term resident groups indicated that long-term residents had slightly more friends in the rural areas surrounding Vegreville. There is some suggestion that temporal processes increase the multistrandedness³ of the networks, so that as time spent in the community lengthens more people come to be known in different social contexts (Goudy, 1990).

The third group of social relationships examined were those further than 30 miles from Vegreville. It was expected that newcomers and long-term residents would maintain different sizes of long distance friendship networks. One reason for that was that the more urban characteristics people possess, the more likely they were to have specialized social networks spread over larger geographical distances. As newcomers tended to have urban origins, they were also expected to have larger long distance friendship networks. This was supported by the data, with 61.8 percent of newcomers having many friends living over 30 miles from Vegreville compared to 36.5 percent of long-term residents. Qualitative data indicated that the majority of these friends resided in the City of Edmonton or from the newcomer's community of origin.

4.3 Organizational Participation

Research indicates that people who are involved in organizations tend to have larger friendship networks than those who are not because organizations bring individuals into contact with others who share common interests. Data on the frequency, duration and intensity of organizational membership were examined for Vegreville.

Cortese (1982) stated that when people move to a new community, one way for them to establish roots is to become active in local organizations. Data from Vegreville indicated that

³ Multistrandedness refers to the number of different ways people become involved with one another socially.

73.8 percent of respondents belonged to local organizations. A comparison of organizational membership and age indicated that organization members were likely to be younger adults (less than 50 years of age). This may be because age related factors work both for and against organizational membership by affecting the time available for social activities and physical ability.

The type of membership in local organizations by newcomers and long-term residents was also compared. The socio-economic status of newcomers in Vegreville suggested that they would hold leadership positions in community organizations. This proved to be the case as interviews suggested that older long-term residents were willing to let newcomers take over the more demanding jobs in local organizations. Interviews with long-term residents indicated that they felt they had met their obligations to community organizations through their leadership in the past. They also stated that the organizations benefited from new leadership. It was noted that long-term residents who had remained active in administrative roles in organizations were less likely to hold formal positions (elected positions such as president or treasurer), preferring the role of a volunteer for groups such as 4-H, youth groups or church based organizations.

4.4 The Use of Community Services

One aspect of integration is related to daily activities which bring newcomers and long-term residents into contact with one another. Daily activities include shopping, use of local recreational facilities and use of the health care system. The use of local services provides individuals with regular contact with one another leading to the recognition of locals and facilitates the formation of informal social contacts. While these activities are not indicative of social integration, they do produce a feeling of familiarity and belonging among the local residents. "Recognition" is one aspect of rural communities that people appreciate and place a high value on.

Recreation is an important part of the lifestyle for most people. Different forms of recreation such as swimming and golf not only provide the individual with pleasurable activity, but provide an opportunity to meet other community residents. If people do not find those activities in the community they go elsewhere. Through the interviews it was indicated that some individuals travel to Edmonton to participate in specialized recreational interests, but most are

able to meet their needs locally.

5. Social Integration of Newcomers in Vegreville: A Discussion

The ability of newcomers to integrate into the social structure of the community varied due to personal characteristics. Some newcomers complained about experiencing difficulties fitting into the social structure of Vegreville when compared to their experiences in other communities. The problem was two dimensional. The first was that the community has a strong Ukrainian cultural component which has supported a social network that functions independently within the community⁴. As a result newcomers were trying to establish social contacts in a social structure they are unfamiliar with. Subsequently newcomers faced a cultural barrier to social acceptance unless they were ethnic Ukrainian and had religious affiliations with either the Ukrainian Catholic or Orthodox churches or had extended family ties in Vegreville.

Other barriers to social integration of newcomers were attributed to educational, economic and social differences. As interests separated newcomers and long-term residents from one another members of each group sought social relationships with people they shared common interests with.

5.1 Integration into Local Social Networks

The influx of migrants of higher socio-economic status to Vegreville changed the social patterns within the community. Early efforts were made to integrate newcomers into the local social structure through the establishment of programs that matched new families and local families who shared similar characteristics. While these programs were helpful, the newcomers had sufficient social skills and experience in living in new communities that they established their own social networks within a short time.

For newcomers the place of employment was the first place for social interaction to occur. This was particularly evident among newcomers associated with the Alberta Environmental

⁴ The social network for people of specific ethnic extraction in Vegreville originates in the churches. It is supported through church membership (Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic) and strong family linkages. With much of their social involvement originating in the church and/or with kin contact with other community residents is limited.

Research Centre. The Centre brought together a large contingent of people with similar interests, consequently friendship networks developed, allowing it to function as its own "social club". The pattern was repeated in other local facilities employing large numbers of professionals. As a result, rather than being dependent on the community as a source of social contacts, newcomers developed social networks independent from those existing in the community. This resulted in more recent newcomers integrating into social networks dominated by other in-migrants.

The neighbourhoods also provided an important structural setting for interaction between community residents. They provided some selectivity for social contact as individuals (or families) living in a given area tended to be of a similar socio-economic status. Social gatherings which included neighbours and work associates provided people with the opportunity to diversify their local friendship networks. It was apparent from interview data that considerable socializing occurs during the summer when large groups can meet outdoors.

5.2 Familial Effects on Development of Friendship Networks

Data from Vegreville indicated that family structure and the presence of children contributed to the social integration of newcomers. Attending activities with children provided the parents with informal opportunities to socialize with other adults in the community. This appeared particularly important for young homemakers as they have limited opportunities to socialize with others and develop their own friendship networks.

The second aspect of family, the presence of extended family appeared to be important in Vegreville. Information from the interviews suggested that having relatives residing in Vegreville eased the social integration of newcomers, but the sample size did not allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding their effect on the rate of social integration. While having family members in the community facilitated the integration of newcomers into the social networks of long-term residents, it was not possible to determine the degree to which it would occur.

5.3 Size of Friendship Networks and Length of Residence

Data indicated little differentiation between the number of friends that newcomers and long-term residents had in their local networks. Individuals interviewed indicated that the size

of the friendship network they had in Vegreville was similar to the one they had in the community where they lived previously. Temporal effects did not prove to be significant to the size of friendship networks, as it was possible to have lived in Vegreville for a relatively short time and have a large network. Equally probable was living there for many years and having a small friendship network. Information obtained through the interview process indicated that network size was due to personal preferences and social characteristics. For example, elderly respondents indicated that personal friendship networks had decreased in size due to mortality.

5.4 Specialized Friendship Networks

The diversity within the population of Vegreville has contributed to the development of independent social networks for newcomers and long-term residents. Each of these was distinctive and reflected the personal characteristics of their members. Friendship networks established by newcomers differed from those of long-term residents with respect to their specialization and density. One reason for this was that the pattern for establishing social contacts differed. Newcomers tended to utilize the workplace and local organizations as primary sources of social contact. The practice allowed for the rapid identification of other residents who shared their interests. This contributed to the integration of newcomers into local social networks largely populated by individuals who had also moved to Vegreville in the past 15 years. The friends acquired were not expected to meet all of the newcomers' social needs, instead they only spent time together to share in specific common interests. This led to the social integration of newcomers into low density, specialized friendship networks (Fischer, 1982) indicative of urban social networks.

The social networks of most long-term residents differed from those of newcomers, with friends sharing many social activities. As well, people within these social networks would be known to one another and would be more likely to include relatives.

5.5 Social Integration through Organizational Membership

Organizational membership proved to be the most important factor for social integration in Vegreville. Participation in local organizations affected the length of time it took for newcomers to be accepted and the size of the friendship networks that were established. Overall,

73.8 percent of respondents were members of local organizations.

Information suggested that recent newcomers are readily accepted in the organizations, this differs from the experience of newcomers arriving prior to 1980. As newcomers became active in the community and began to infiltrate the ranks of local organizations there was some friction. Some long-term residents felt their social power was being eroded. This sentiment was expressed through comments like: "Who are they to tell us how to do things,". Acceptance came as contributions of newcomers became apparent with many of them initiating new programs or contributing to existing ones.

Qualitative data indicated that organizational membership served as a key component in the development of local friendship networks. The selection of local organizations allowed people of similar interests to come together in a formal or informal setting, making it easier to identify individuals with the potential to be friends. Due to the size of Vegreville the number of organizations an individual could join were limited in scope, with the most popular being related to sports or the churches. A few professional associations also operate within the community.

5.6 The Role of Religion in Social Integration

The churches in Vegreville served an important role in the integration of newcomers. With twelve churches in Vegreville individuals interested in retaining their religious affiliation should be able to continue in their preferred church.

Respondents indicated that church membership played a significant role in their adjustment to the community and the establishment of social contacts. They stated that "church was a good place to meet people" and that they felt welcome there. Meeting people in this social environment minimized barriers to social integration. Individuals who integrated into the Vegreville social structure in a relatively short time attributed it to involvement with a local church. Although no church dominated in the interviews, secondary data from the community suggested that newcomers joined churches other than the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic churches.

6. Perceived Barriers to Social Integration

Barriers to integration were considered to be any factors personal or otherwise which limited the access of newcomers to social structures in the community. Research indicated a number of barriers to social integration in Vegreville varying from differences in personal characteristics of the newcomers to attitudes toward local social opportunities.

The specific year in which newcomers migrated to Vegreville affected ease of entry into the local social structure. Newcomers who came prior to 1980 indicated greater difficulty establishing social contacts, however their presence has made it easier for recent newcomers to establish local social contacts although there is some reticence expressed about developing friendships in case they do not stay. Potential lengthiness of friendships was considered important for both newcomers and long-term residents. This has implications for the newcomers, as difficulties encountered in developing initial social contacts in the community can influence the decision to remain.

Being single poses a significant barrier to social integration for potential newcomers as the community is socially oriented toward couples. This creates difficulties for singles and is further compounded by the proximity of Vegreville to Edmonton (making daily commuting feasible). As a result of limited social opportunities many higher status single adults have opted to live in Edmonton and commute to Vegreville for work.

Gender was also a barrier, selecting against young, single, well educated women. The problem was a lack of suitable opportunities for these women to meet potential companions in an informal setting, the bars were not considered appropriate. While single, educated men were present in the community, it was apparent that they were either less socially active than the single women or were not considered suitable by the single women.

There were also cultural barriers to integration in Vegreville. As many of the social contacts originate in the church and the extended family, newcomers will be unintentionally excluded from many functions in the community unless they develop friendships with long-term local residents. To counteract this friendships need to be developed in the neighborhoods and through local organizations.

7. Summary and Conclusions

Research indicated that integration into local social networks occurred in a limited context. Social integration as a process focused on the individual's ability to integrate into micro social structures, not into a singular macro structure encompassing the community. In this context, the newcomers interacted with other community residents who belonged to social networks functioning within the community. Through this interaction the individual identified social networks in which he or she could become a member. Research indicated that the newcomer, rather than becoming a member of one social network would become a member of several local social networks.

The process of integration in this research was concerned with variables which facilitated the establishment of new friendship (social) networks in the new community, specifically personal characteristics and participation in community activities. Through participation in formal and informal organizations operating in the community the newcomer establishes a social niche which allows for interaction with diverse social networks operating in the community. The position occupied by the newcomer in each network he or she participated in suggested that the social structure undergoes continuous change.

Analysis of the Vegreville data indicated personal differences between newcomers and long-term residents were sufficient to affect the patterns of social interaction. Data indicated that on average, newcomers were of a higher socio-economic status than long-term residents. This, combined with differences in personal characteristics contributed to the voluntary segregation of the community into social networks dominated either by newcomers or long-term residents respectively. Currently these social networks function independently and pose no threat to the community as a social entity, as the social networks are striving to increase attractiveness of the community to both newcomers and long-term residents.

Since the population stabilized in 1982, new social networks have developed, providing recent in-migrants with more opportunities for social interaction. The social structure of the community has also changed because the newcomers established local social (friendship) networks which resembled the urban networks they were familiar with. Newer social networks in Vegreville were characterized by their specialization and lack of density.

The characteristics of local social networks newcomers established in Vegreville were also

influenced by processes employed for the identification of potential friends. Three main sources were used. These were social contacts at work, in the neighbourhoods and local organizations. Newcomers to Vegreville indicated that organizational membership was the most efficient source for social contacts as it facilitated the identification of local residents who shared the newcomers' interests and values. The organizations which contributed the most to the social integration of newcomers were associated with the churches and sports.

Patterns of social interaction differed between newcomers and long-term residents with respect to geographical distribution of friends and network density. Data indicated that newcomers and long-term residents had friendship networks of a similar size locally. What was more significant was the composition of the network. In the case of long-term residents, the local friendship networks contained proportionally more family members (extended family) than did those of newcomers. Individuals with many kin living in Vegreville and the surrounding rural areas had fewer non-kin in their networks, as family obligations took priority over other social relationships. Long-term residents also had more friends living in the surrounding rural areas. Based on this, it was assumed that the friendship networks of long-term residents contained fewer non-kin. Limitations imposed by familial associations of long-term residents and patterns of social interaction suggested that the friendship networks of newcomers would be composed of other newcomers to the community. This was supported by the data.

Social networks maintained outside the community also differed between newcomers and long-term residents. The primary reasons identified for this pertained to the personal characteristics of newcomers. Age, marital status and gender were all mentioned as being predictors for integration. Age in Vegreville was of importance as potential migrants tend to be younger than the average resident in the community. This would affect the nature of their social participation in the community. When marital status and gender are combined several implications became evident, first, that singles moving to Vegreville are at a disadvantage. Secondly, if the newcomers are both single and female the number of social opportunities for them are limited. The situation becomes even more complex if they are of a higher socio-economic status.

Place of origin was also considered important, as newcomers are likely to retain friends in the community or communities where they resided previously. The difficulty in retaining long

distance relationships suggested that only highly valued friendships were maintained. The availability of disposable income, related to higher household income allows newcomers to leave the community to continue these social relationships. These relationships differed from those of long-term residents whose long-distance social networks were composed of kin and friends who had left the community.

The case of Vegreville is not unlike that of other communities who seek to attract government facilities or industry willing to relocate in a rural community. This experience may be used by these communities to integrate newcomers as the process is common to all communities faced with a sudden increase in their population base. By preparing long-term residents for the incipient change internal stresses to the social structure may be minimized. It is necessary to retain a strong core structure within the community to provide social stability until the population base stabilizes at a new level. A failure to provide this will result in an increased incidence of social problems within the community and contribute to transience of newcomers. The instability will also have negative impacts on long-term residents and contribute to negative sentiments regarding newcomers and change associated with them.

Whether or not the community is prepared for change, it will occur. It is the actions and reactions of both newcomers and long-term residents which will determine the length of time required for the two groups to integrate into a cohesive social structure or to form coexisting groups who both serve the better interests of the community. Once this occurs the social structure will stabilize and all residents will benefit.

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Table 3. Post-Secondary Qualifications of Persons Living in Vegreville, 1986

Post Secondary Qualifications	Male	Female	Total
Education, Recreation, Counselling Services	60	130	190
Fine and Applied Arts	--	20	20
Humanities & Related Fields	25	30	50
Social Science & Related Fields	30	35	*65
Communications, Management & Business Administration	30	145	*175
Agriculture & Biological Science/Technologies	60	55	*115
Engineering & Applied Science	35	--	*35
Engineering & Applied Technologies	395	20	*415
Health Profession, Science & Technologies	30	150	*180
Math & Physical Science	35	5	40
Total	695	590	1,285

* Indicates post-secondary classifications which may include personnel from the Alberta Environmental Center.

Source: Statistics Canada, 94-118:193.

Table 4. Occupational Groups, Vegreville, 1981

Occupational Major Groups	Male	Female	Total
Total Labour Force	1,335	990	2,325
Managerial, Administrative	135	25	165
Natural Sciences, Engineering, Math	125	30	160
Social Sciences	--	25	25
Teaching	35	80	115
Religion	5	--	5
Medicine and Health	15	65	80
Artistic, Literacy, Recreation	10	--	10
Clerical	65	390	455
Sales	110	110	220
Service	75	200	275
Farming, Horticulture, Fishing, Trapping	115	15	130
Mines, Quarries	95	--	95
Processing	--	5	5
Machining	50	--	50
Product Fabricating, Assembling	85	5	90
Construction Trade	260	5	265
Transport Equipment Operating	60	10	70
Other	100	10	110
Occupation - N/A	--	10	10

Table 5. Occupational Groups, Vegreville, 1986

Occupational Major Groups	Male	Female	Total
All Occupations	1,375	1,095	2,470
Management, Administration & Related Occupations	180	55	235
Teaching & Related Occupations	30	80	110
Occupations in Medicine & Health	50	120	170
Technology, Sociology, Religion, Artistic & Related Occupations	125	95	220
Clerical & Related Occupations	50	340	390
Sales Occupations	85	110	195
Service Occupations	105	260	370
Primary Occupations	110	10	120
Processing Occupations	20	10	30
Machinery, Product Fabrication, Assembly & Repairing Occupations	175	5	180
Construction Trades Occupations	245	--	245
Transport Equipment Operations Occupations	85	--	85
Other	115	5	120

Source: Statistics Canada 94-118, p. 195.

Table 6. Population of Vegreville by Age and Gender, 1976

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0 - 4 years	130	125	255
5 - 9 years	130	150	280
10 - 14 years	175	165	340
15 - 19 years	165	200	365
20 - 24 years	130	125	255
25 - 34 years	205	215	420
35 - 44 years	180	185	365
45 - 54 years	200	220	420
55 - 64 years	235	320	555
65 - 69 years	140	150	290
70 years and over	300	305	605
Total	1,900	2,170	4,160

Table 7. Population of Vegreville by Age and Gender, 1981

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0 - 4 years	180	165	345
5 - 9 years	185	180	370
10 - 14 years	190	200	390
15 - 19 years	225	220	445
20 - 24 years	190	215	405
25 - 29 years	185	185	370
30 - 34 years	160	170	330
35 - 39 years	130	135	265
40 - 44 years	120	115	235
45 - 49 years	110	120	230
50 - 54 years	120	120	245
55 - 59 years	115	155	270
60 - 64 years	125	175	295
65 - 69 years	130	170	300
70 yeras and over	350	410	765
Total	2,515	2,735	5,255

Table 8. Population of Vegreville by Age and Gender, 1986

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0 - 4 years	190	155	345
5 - 9 years	185	170	355
10 - 14 years	175	165	340
15 - 19 years	155	200	355
20 - 24 years	200	220	440
25 - 34 years	390	390	780
35 - 44 years	290	285	775
45 - 54 years	220	240	460
55 - 64 years	240	270	510
65 - 74 years	240	345	585
75 +	255	320	575
Total	2,530	2,745	5,276

Source: Statistics Canada, 94-117, p. 193, 1986.

Table 9. Total Income 1981 (15 Years and Over, Vegreville)

Total Income	Male	Female	Total
< \$2,000	115	255	370
\$2,000 - \$3,999	105	295	405
\$4,000 - \$5,999	295	440	735
\$6,000 - \$9,999	265	285	550
\$10,000 - \$14,999	200	275	475
\$15,000 - \$19,999	235	105	340
\$20,000 - \$24,999	195	50	245
\$25,000 and over	445	55	500

Source: Statistics Canada, 94-117, p. 197, 1986.

Table 10. Total Income 1986 (15 Years and Over, Vegreville)

Total Income	Male	Female	Total
< \$1,000	1,880	1,935	3,815
\$1,000 - \$2,999	75	95	170
\$3,000 - \$4,999	100	170	270
\$5,000 - \$6,999	45	115	160
\$7,000 - \$9,999	340	470	810
\$10,000 - \$14,999	235	275	510
\$15,000 - \$19,999	150	195	345
\$20,000 - \$24,999	185	190	375
\$25,000 - \$29,999	175	90	265
\$30,000 - \$34,999	90	45	175
\$35,000 and over	130	65	460

Source: Statistics Canada, 94-117, p. 197, 1986.