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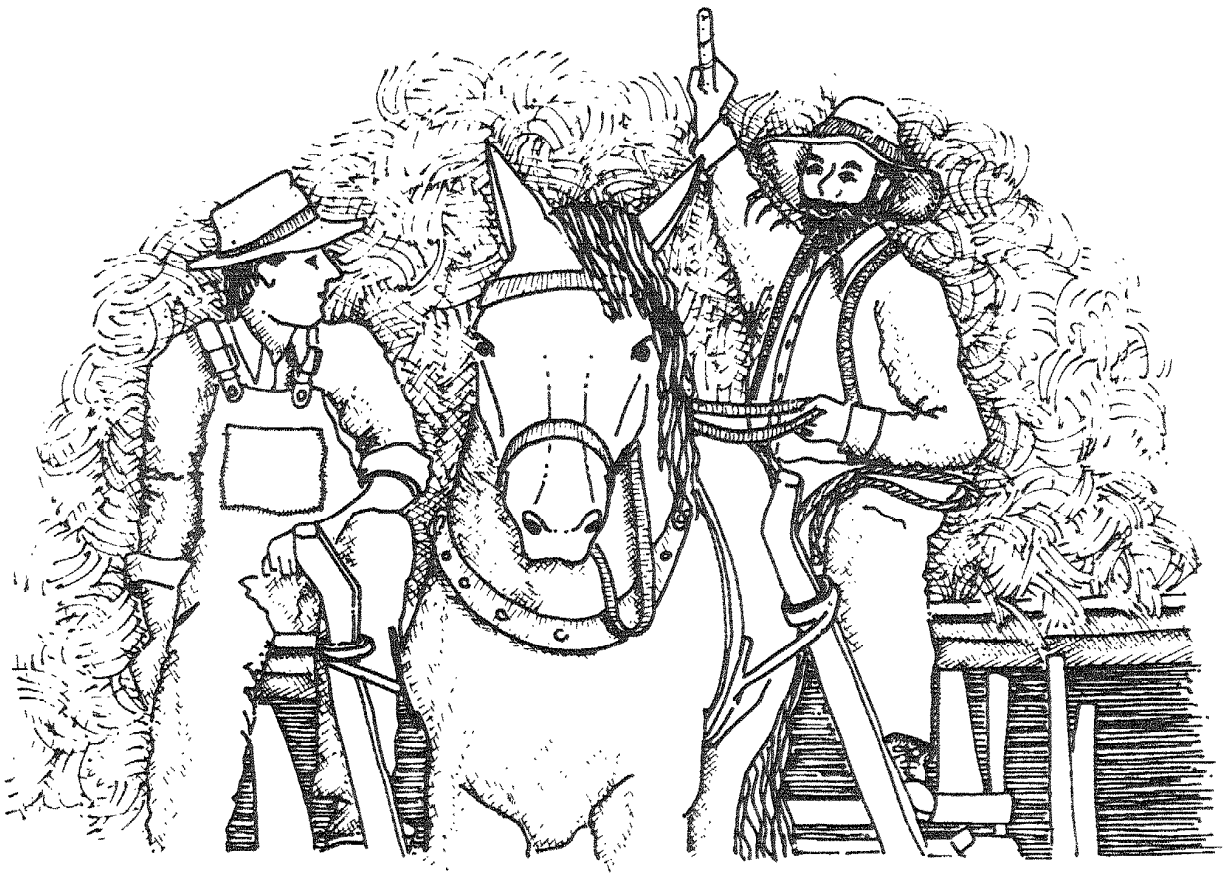
Rural America: A Living Tapestry

Proceedings of "The Research Fit" Module, 3rd Annual U.S. Forest Service Rural Communities Assistance Conference

Knoxville, Tennessee
October 15-19, 1995



Abstract

This proceedings contains five management and research methodology papers. The management papers address economic development of rural communities from three perspectives, while two research methodology papers provide a critique of research on the economic impacts recreation enterprises have on rural development, and discuss the need for rural development research to be done by teams and the importance of collaboration in the process.

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Edited by:
Herbert E. Echelberger
USDA Forest Service

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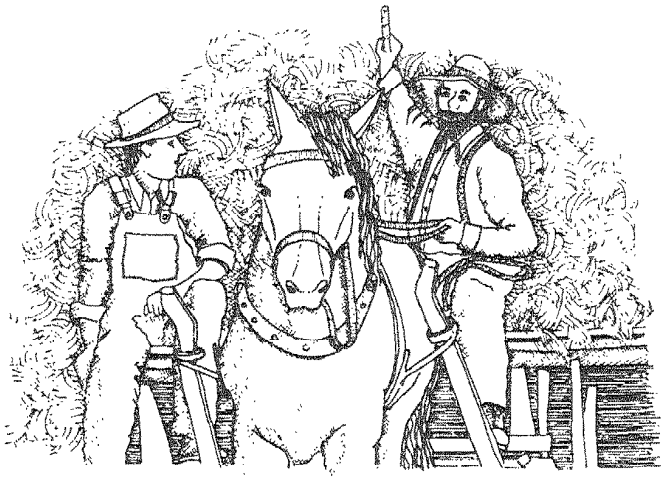

Introduction

Herbert E. Echelberger
Session Moderator

USDA Forest Service
P.O. Box 968
Burlington, VT 05402

The USDA Forest Service is committed to revitalizing rural America. This is reflected in its community assistance program and the fact that 25 percent of its revenue is returned to local communities for schools and roads. The Northeastern Forest Experiment Station and Northeastern Area, State & Private Forestry offices share this commitment. The Station participates through the National Research Program to Enhance Rural America. In the summer of 1995, Susan Odell of State & Private Forestry asked me to develop a research module for the 3rd Annual U.S. Forest Service Rural Communities Assistance Conference that was held in October in Knoxville, Tennessee. Entitled "The Research Fit," the session featured presentations that addressed the quality of life and economic stability of rural communities as well as presentations by the same authors who described the methodology they use in conducting rural development research.

An interesting thread runs through the presentations: all of the authors stated that considerable research was required **before** their studies could begin. Despite possessing a high level of knowledge about the subject matter, each researcher required assistance from other disciplines. Rural development research, then, is a multidisciplinary effort that requires collaboration. It is this very requirement that contributes to quality research.

This publication includes two sections. The first presents results of work carried out by researchers, while the second examines the research process. In section I, Don English addresses issues that need to be considered by planners who are trying to integrate recreation into a rural development effort. He uses a case study to illustrate his points. In section II, he provides a critique of research on the economic impacts of recreation on rural development. Judy Van Cleve focuses on a community development concept that links the provisions of unique goods, services, and amenities with the well-being of small towns described as "destination places." These locations have strong ties to their past, present, and future, and are populated by citizens who are united in their commitment to community liveability. Finally, Al Luloff first describes a study that relates community activeness to success, as measured by employment, income, community services, and population change. He then emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary talents on a research team and points out the need for a collaborative approach to the research process.

Section I
Rural Development Research

Issues in Using Resource-Based Recreation for Rural Development

Donald B. K. English

USDA Forest Service
Southern Research Station
Athens, GA 30602-2044

Introduction

Recreation is often considered as one option by those whose goal is to improve the economic situation in a rural area, especially if the area contains a potential recreation resource such as a lake, river or forest. Equally often, the full range of issues associated with making recreation resource development a successful part of a rural development strategy are not adequately considered. It is the purpose of this paper to identify and discuss a set of issues that can be used as a template by rural development planners. The issues will be addressed as questions for a proposed recreation site development in the text that follows. Empirical results from a recent study of visitors to the Nantahala River in western North Carolina will be included for illustration. Data on those using guided rafts, unguided rented rafts and inflatable kayaks, and private hardboats (canoes and kayaks) were obtained. Total spending as well as spending in Macon and Swain counties (NC) was obtained for 18 different expenditure items.

Question 1: What is the Resource Base?

First priority is to understand how the site to be developed fits in with the existing set of recreation resources in and near the region. Economic growth from recreation comes from monies spent by visitors on recreation trips, so it is important to consider the types of trips that might have the planned site as a destination. What activity or set of activities are visitors going to do there? How does this development complement the current set of opportunities in the region? The set of activities available should be internally consistent, and be enough to occupy an entire weekend. For example, people going fishing often camp as well, so resources for both will be desirable in close proximity if the goal is to attract anglers. Will we be competing with the use of other recreation resources already in the region or with ones outside our region? Preferred developments would be those that complement existing resource uses and compete with extraregional resources.

For the example, the Nantahala River provides a 3- to 4-hour river experience that contains a number of class II and a few class III rapids. Canoes, kayaks, and inflatable rafts and kayaks are used to float the river. River floating is dependent on hydropower releases from Nantahala Lake. A number of other rivers in the Southeast provide longer or more difficult river trips. The river trip can occupy one day of a weekend trip.

Question 2: Who are the Users?

Who is the intended market for this development? How often are visitors going to visit per year? What are the intended visitors going to give up (that they are now doing) to come here? Economic growth comes from new money entering an economy. Thus, the primary market should lie outside the local region. If the majority of users are regional residents, then usually the money they spend in making recreation trips to the site merely redistributes money already in the region. Only if the developed site reduces the number of trips residents take to extra-regional sites, by getting them to 'buy local', will the recreation patterns of region residents contribute to economic growth.

A related question is whether the intent is to obtain additional visitors (new trips) to the region, or to increase the length of time current visitors remain in the region. In the former case, it may be instructive to examine activity patterns and visitor origins for the site's intended competition. In the latter case, discussions with managers at sites used by current visitors can provide clues for understanding visitors and providing information to them. Visitors to the Nantahala River come from all over the U.S. However, almost 60% come from GA, NC, TN, or SC. Many are repeat visitors to the area who come on average several times a year.

Question 3: How Much and What Will Visitors Buy?

Purchase patterns for visitors on the same type of and length of trip can often provide a reasonable approximation for how new visitors will spend money. In general, longer trips involve greater purchases, partly because of the need for purchasing food and lodging, but also because these trips also often involve multiple activities. The amount of money spent per trip also varies with the activity or setting. High adventure outfitted recreation (whitewater rafting, climbing, etc.), motorized recreation (off-road driving, motorboating), and recreation in developed settings (camping, skiing) often are associated with greater levels of per person spending. People on one-day trips, or visiting remote backcountry areas spend comparatively little money.

In general, recreation visitors make purchases for four major items (in decreasing dollar order per person per trip): lodging, food at both restaurants and food stores, activities (equipment rental, user fees, permits, and tours), and transportation. Souvenirs, clothing, and film are frequent small-ticket items. Equipment repairs are occasionally needed by bikers, ORVers, boaters, and others.

The number and types of businesses that provide opportunities for purchase by visitors is also important. Where no business infrastructure exists to meet the needs of travellers, then little will be purchased. Incentives for entrepreneurs to provide goods and services that match the intended activity and market mix may be needed.

For visitors to the Nantahala River, the average visitor spends about $128 per trip (Table 1). Guided rafters spent the most on lodging and food of the three groups. Private hardboaters spent more on average for clothing and footwear, and less on guide service and equipment rentals.

Question 4: Where Will the Money Go?

This question further examines the economic structure of the region to be developed, in light of the money visitors can be expected to spend in the local economy. What will visitors buy in the local area? Who will own the businesses that visitors frequent? Where will these businesses go for their suppliers? The more of both that are local, the greater will be the overall economic impacts of visitor spending. For example, if restaurants can buy their produce from local farmers, then the impacts to the region will be greater than if produce must be imported from other regions. The difference will be at least the value of the additional produce sold by the farmers.

Table 1.— Total trip expenditures by boater type, for visitors to the Nantahala River

Item	Guided rafters	Unguided rafters	Private hardboaters
	$ spent per person		
Hotel	46.05	26.03	19.39
Camping	2.59	4.22	9.84
Food at stores	12.61	14.45	14.67
Beverages	4.47	4.00	3.20
Restaurants	22.67	17.69	15.82
Car rental	.52	1.52	.18
Gasoline	13.36	14.56	17.89
Car repairs	.54	2.75	.52
Fishing permits	.34	.41	.23
Fishing bait	.09	.15	2.70
Guide fees	10.58	5.10	3.64
Equipment rental	3.29	13.60	7.32
Film	1.21	1.82	.56
Film developing	.94	1.28	.61
Footwear	.64	1.11	12.02
Clothing	3.37	3.65	10.69
Souvenirs	6.39	8.79	2.56
Other	1.96	7.95	6.06
Total:	128.54	129.08	127.08

A similar issue concerns the source of labor for employees at recreation-related businesses. These types of businesses are very labor intensive. Wages paid to nonresident employees escape from the regional economy. Is there a local pool of unemployed or underemployed workers? Does the local labor pool have the skills necessary to fill the expected jobs? If not, will workers migrate from other areas or from other jobs in the region? Will there be enough recreation demand to keep these people employed year-round or only seasonally?

Results of economic impact models such as IMPLAN (Alward, G. S. and E. M. Lofting, 1985) can provide many answers to the above types of questions. For private hardboaters, about $51 was spent in the two counties (Table 2). For the other two groups, between $43 and $46 was spent there. A much higher proportion of hardboaters' lodging and food spending was made in the local area.

Each 1,000 visitors generated between $37,000 and $40,000 in income to employees and business proprietors, and about 1.8 jobs in the two-county area (Table 3). These figures account for multiplier effects of initial spending and the spending of additional income earned by households through increased wages. The majority of the impacts are felt in service sectors including hotel lodging, restaurants, and guide and other recreation services (Table 4.).

Question 5: How Many Visitors Do We Need?

For public investments, an accounting of costs and benefits are often necessary. Because public funds are limited, agencies must often show that money was spent wisely. For improvement of a recreation site for the purpose of rural development, key benefit criteria could be a target number of jobs or local income expected to accrue to the local economy. These results could be compared to results from some alternative use of the public money. From the answers to Questions 3 and 4, planners can examine what levels of visitation would be needed to ensure that the project has greater benefits than costs.

For example, consider a COMPLETELY HYPOTHETICAL public expenditure to improve the Nanatahala River for recreation. The best alternative use of the money would generate 50 jobs per year in the two-county area. Since each 1,000 visitors generates approximately 1.85 jobs, the river improvements would have to support 50/1.85 = 27.03 thousand river users per year to be superior to the alternative use of the money.

Question 6: How Many Visitors Can We Handle?

This question begins to examine the social impacts of recreation development beyond the labor issue addressed

Table 2.—Spending patterns, by boater type, for money spent in Macon and Swain counties, NC.

Item	Guided	Unguided	Private
	($ per person per trip)		
Hotel	14.61	8.00	11.25
Camping	0.85	2.19	7.05
Food at stores	3.74	4.64	5.39
Restaurants	7.89	5.91	7.34
Car rental	0.10	0.01	0.00
Gasoline	2.19	2.91	3.06
Car repairs	0.00	0.04	0.43
Fishing permits	0.00	0.19	0.23
Fishing bait	0.00	0.05	0.00
Outfitter rental	6.95	3.21	2.56
Equipment rental	1.69	9.43	1.46
Film purchase	0.50	0.44	0.34
Film development	0.25	0.05	0.00
Footwear	0.03	0.42	0.75
Clothing	1.34	2.39	7.15
Souvenirs	1.91	3.99	0.95
Other	1.43	2.40	3.41
Total:	43.48	46.27	51.37

Table 3.—Economic impacts to the Macon/Swain economy per 1000 visitors to the Nantahala River

	Total Industrial output	Total income	Value added	Jobs
	(Thousands of 1992 dollars)			(#FTE)
Guided:				
Direct	30.7	18.0	20.6	1.18
Indirect	4.1	2.2	2.4	0.07
Induced	28.4	16.7	18.9	0.56
Total:	63.3	36.9	41.9	1.81
Unguided:				
Direct	31.3	17.7	20.0	1.17
Indirect	4.7	2.6	2.8	0.08
Induced	28.4	16.7	18.9	0.56
Total:	64.4	37.0	41.7	1.81
Private:				
Direct	34.4	20.3	23.5	1.23
Indirect	4.4	2.3	2.5	0.07
Induced	29.7	17.5	19.8	0.59
Total:	68.5	40.1	45.8	1.89

Table 4.—Industrial output and employment per 1000 visitors, for selected economic sectors

Sector description	Guided	Unguided	Private
	--------- (Thousands of 1992 dollars) --------		
Industrial Output			
Hotels and other lodging	12.1	8.2	14.3
Amusement/recreation services	7.6	10.8	3.7
Eating and drinking places	9.2	7.4	8.7
Service stations	1.7	2.1	2.3
Miscellaneous retail stores	1.9	2.3	2.4
Food stores	1.5	1.7	1.8
% of total impacts	53.7	50.5	48.5
Employment	----- Number of full-time equivalents -----		
Hotels and other lodging	.50	.34	.59
Amusement/recreation services	.32	.45	.16
Eating and drinking places	.34	.28	.33
Service stations	.04	.05	.05
Food stores	.06	.07	.08
Miscellaneous retail stores	.06	.07	.08
% of total impacts	72.9	69.6	68.3

in question 5. These issues evaluate the quality of the economic development by examining the accompaniments to increased recreation visitation. How well can existing roads, police, trash, and other services handle the increased load? What, if any, improvements will be needed in these services and who will pay for them? What effects will further recreation/tourist, traffic, and business have on the quality of life of residents? What will be the effects on existing recreation services for locals?

For the Nantahala River, traffic from the hypothetical additional 27,000 visitors could overburden traffic and parking facilities that are already congested. Air quality in the Nantahala Gorge, pedestrian traffic, and reduction in the quality of the recreation experience could all suffer with additional traffic, depending on when visitation increases occur. Additional personnel from the USDA-Forest Service or county sheriff's department might be necessary for monitoring and safety.

Conclusion

This paper has identified a series of questions and issues that planners need to address when considering recreation development as a means to rural development. The issues presented here cannot hope to cover all the nuances of development applied to a specific locality. However, these do provide a general guideline for evaluation and understanding of the pitfalls and promises of managing growth through natural resource use.

Literature Cited

Alward, G. S. and E. M. Lofting. 1985. Opportunities for Analyzing the Economic Impacts of Recreation and Tourism Expenditures using IMPLAN. Contributed paper, annual meeting of the Regional Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Destinations: Opportunities for Economic Development in the American Small Town

Judith Van Cleve, Research Associate

Community/Economic Development Center
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Introduction

For many years my family has traveled to Northern Wisconsin for summer vacations. Originally the trek north began in Chicago, then later from St. Paul, Minnesota and finally from east-central Mississippi. The small towns of Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Tennessee and Wisconsin that we have all passed through year after year have become familiar landmarks and points of interest through the car windows. We have noted changes in the community landscape, and over the years it has become apparent that some towns have thrived while others have languished. Some of these communities have become particularly familiar to us because we have made concerted efforts to stop at a favorite restaurant, a scenic downtown park, or a store that has something that cannot be purchased anywhere else.

The idea for Destinations was conceived during one of those road trips. Prompted by interest, both professionally and personally, I have often wondered why apparently similar towns on the same highway are so radically different. Specifically, I have wondered why one community has flourished where another has obviously been treading water. Why do we always want to stop in one town and drive straight through another?

Research and experience have taught me that these were questions that communities have been asking themselves on an increasingly regular basis. Many a small town in America is at a crossroads. National chains have replaced locally owned businesses; farms and local factories increasingly sit idle; and the costs of developing and maintaining community services have skyrocketed. The prevailing response of the agencies and individuals in charge of providing assistance often has been one of benign neglect. "We would like to help, but we have bigger problems than the loss of one or two little towns." The fact is that economic decline is a way of life for the majority of small towns in America. It is disturbing to realize that a way of life still viewed as intrinsic to our national psyche is often only a hallucination in our collective rear view mirror.

It is telling that the loss of economic health in the American small town has paralleled the widespread decline of inner-city neighborhoods. Many of those neighborhoods have functioned as small communities within a larger urban framework. They once featured attractive residences, local drugstores, small family-owned groceries, one or two neighborhood restaurants, clothing stores, local schools, branch libraries, local parks, and churches. The local commercial block was the equivalent of Main Street: it served as the economic and social center for a distinct population. Today, scores of such neighborhoods have been all but abandoned. Do the declines of small towns and inner-city neighborhoods share similar causes? I believe that the loss of the goods, services, and amenities unique to a particular community is the proper focus of any study of community decline. This is true for small towns and city neighborhoods alike. Small towns which have successfully pursued growth and prosperity provide excellent models for the process of rethinking traditional approaches to economic and community development in the United States.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to provide a program for community economic development that is written in stone and comes in ten not-so-easy (or affordable) lessons. Rather, it is an initial examination of small towns that have thrived and grown through the development and nurturing of products, services, or amenities unique to their communities. To a large extent, this study is based on a body of collective experience in the field of community and economic development, as well as on shared observations and intuitions about the success or failure of economic growth in small communities.

The research for this project was conducted by the Center for Community/Economic Development with technical assistance from the Center for Small Town Research and Design, both at Mississippi State University. The study focuses on the successful development of unique niches in the economic marketplace which established statewide or even national identities for noted small communities. The premise of the investigation is that many communities possess viable economic opportunities which are unique to their respective place. Communities in "destination" categories have been researched and analyzed in order to define elements which combine to create an economic locality or "destination."

Research Concept Statement

For many years small-town businesses have lamented the steady redirection of local purchasing power to regional centers and larger cities. This study was developed to highlight the growing importance to local economic growth of specialty niches and the opportunities that those unique markets afford. In addition, the study seeks to encourage small towns within proximity of larger metropolitan areas to view urban residents as potential customers for unique market niches. Towns and communities that successfully develop specialty products, services, and amenities will witness significant economic growth during the remainder of the 1990's and discover that the highway can also bring consumers into town.

The "destination" concept for economic development is based on the assumption that each community has a viable and singular economic asset of great potential. Our research concentrates on the history of the American small town as a local, regional, and national terminus for the delivery of various goods and services.

Characteristics of a successful "destination" include but are not limited to:

- The development of a unique product, or amenity for which the community is known
- Consumers and business "travel" through various modes of transportation and/or telecommunications to purchase or use specific goods and/or services for which the community is known
- Job creation and economic growth in the community as an end result of the development of such unique products, services, or amenities
- Such commodities occupy a unique niche in the regional, national, and/or international economic marketplace. The "destination" locale as either community-based or regional.
- The appearance of ancillary economic growth in the "destination" locale through spin-off economic activities related to the original product, service, or amenity

A "destination" locale is in all likelihood not—

- A place which focuses solely on tourism
- A single business activity
- An individual performing or operating a single activity
- An activity owned or operated by or from interests outside of the community
- A single building or site

It is important to note that towns which focus on community economic development which can "partner" with existing economic resources have a distinct advantage in achieving "destination" status.

A "destination" place is defined here as a locale that supplies necessary, desirable, and unique or rare commodities. We have focused on small towns or rural areas (populations of 20,000 or less) that have experienced significant economic growth because they have achieved a "destination" identity in one or more of the following categories:

- Scenic resources
- Museums or historically significant properties and sites
- "Back of office" and/or other telecommunications
- Agricultural, industrial, government, residential centers
- Catalog/mail order centers
- Specialty retail and commercial niches, i.e., one-of-a-kind shops, unique restaurants, regional garden centers, etc.
- Specialty manufacturing (manufactured products that communities are known for)
- College, university, research, or medical centers
- Retirement communities

This study does not focus on tourism, although tourism is often a by-product of a "destination" economy. The term itself is used to indicate an aim or goal. The intended audience for this research is the community that seeks to cultivate its economic development potential as a unique locale for various goods, services, and amenities, and that significantly extends its market beyond the local community. This study focuses on "niche" development by outlining community/economic development categories and focusing on how existing communities have achieved "destination" status.

Destinations

The defining feature of a destination community is not a unique but elusive sense of place, but is rather a definite product, service, or amenity for which the community is famous. A destination community cannot be reproduced or cloned because it offers a unique mix of enterprise and innovation. There is only one Jackson, Wyoming; one Branson, Missouri; one Boaz, Alabama. These are towns with booming local economies; and they are towns that have not followed the rules. The one common denominator destination places share is that they all have aggressively developed a distinctive economic resource unique to their community. The resource may have been created through the vision of a local entrepreneur, through creative local leadership, or by a political maverick. The success story often begins with the recognition of the potential of and then the development of a significant local resource. Such resources can be people, investment capital institutions, places, and/or products. Destination places are also created by effectively visualizing the future, by predicting the growth of a market for goods and services, and then developing a program to capture much or all of that market.

But why use the concept of a destination as a focus for community/economic development in the American small town? One answer is that the way people think about living, traveling, and consuming has changed. Most Americans want to live, work, shop, and travel within a secure, reasonably accessible environment that offers a variety of goods, services, and amenities. Personal security is increasingly being viewed as a service unto itself, and small towns are usually perceived to be safe places.

Accessibility is also thought to be a positive feature of small town life. Close proximity to work, schools, and shopping means less time spent in transit. The availability of goods and services has been greatly expanded through television retailing and through mail-order firms that now provide an extraordinary array of products to most parts of the world. These trends are expected to continue. Service is also perceived to be part of small town life, although many

communities have felt the pinch of reductions in the federal and state support necessary to augment their ability to meet the rising cost of traditional community services. Expanded telecommunications networks are allowing more and more Americans to live and work outside of metropolitan areas while still enjoying the commercial, governmental, or cultural lifestyles offered by the "big" city.

The competition for urban expatriates, for new businesses, and for tourists is fierce. And there are more and more relevant guide books: The 100 Best Small Towns in America, 50 Fabulous Places to Raise Your Family, Off the Beaten Path: A Guide to More Than 1,000 Scenic & Interesting Places Still Uncrowded and Inviting, etc. Any community interested in long-range economic development and growth will have to be economically competitive, and being competitive means standing out in the crowd. Communities that develop successful local economies are well positioned for bright futures in an increasingly competitive financial environment if they use unique enterprises to generate employment and new wealth.

Trends

The economy of the United States began to change significantly during the last turn of the century. Technological changes in agriculture enabled fewer people to farm land. Cities became hubs for large-scale manufacturing, and, in the process, opportunities for manufacturing and commercial industries centralized operations in the larger cities. Those cities inevitably entered into competition with the old small towns for manpower and commercial enterprise, and because of the availability of labor and capital, the cities won the race for economic growth. In an attempt to compete, many towns adapted large-scale economic planning and design schemes that were originally conceived for metropolitan areas. The implementation of such plans created a generic vision of community that often served to further obscure and diminish each town's unique self-image.

The pendulum is swinging back, however. Chronic and seemingly intractable financial and social problems have had a detrimental impact on the nation's large cities. Many industries and metropolitan residents have come to view the small town as the ideal place to live and work. But the problems of many small communities have festered for years. The local economy is often marginal. Commerce has left downtown and has moved to the highway bypass. Highway businesses are owned and operated by national chains rather than local business people. Community services have been scaled back. Without attractive local economic opportunities, many small towns have found it difficult to parlay into growth and prosperity the emerging desire to live and work in a small town.

How can small towns regenerate themselves and return to the economic mainstream? The thesis of the "destination" economic development theory is that many small communities have unique resources that can serve the development of specialty niches in the economic marketplace. The theory additionally postulates that such resources must be enhanced and leveraged by diversified but focused entrepreneurial investments that operate in a synergistic manner with primary resources in order for real destination development to occur.

One significant aspect of "destination" evolution is the collective ability of a community to visualize the future. While such visualization plays a significant role in product development and market expansion, it is rarely utilized effectively as a community development tool. Economic growth in small communities is often perceived to be synonymous with chasing "smokestack" industry or luring tourists off of the highway to purchase more gew-gaws. While new industry is certainly desirable, many small towns simply cannot meet the infrastructure requirements of significant industrial development. Tourism does represent an alternative market for economic development in communities that have historic, scenic, or recreational significance, but truly, such places are few and far between. To broaden the potential for small communities to participate in the economic marketplace, it is necessary to identify resources that can stimulate and support growth in the coming decades. "Destination" visualization is simply the process of a community first envisioning what products, amenities, and services will be needed in the next ten to twenty years and then determining how it can most effectively participate in that market.

How do communities go about identifying future trends for the nineties and into the next century? One excellent resource for market trend prediction is the Popcorn Report by Faith Popcorn. Published in 1991, the book outlines ten trends which will greatly impact life in the United States during the next twenty-five years. The primary trends identified are: "cocooning," the growing national concern for personal comfort and security; the desire for new types of recreation and entertainment; the aging of an increasing percentage of the American population; and the increasing public awareness of social and environmental responsibilities. Ms. Popcorn asserts that trend identification can be individualized through the development of a "Talent Bank." Translated for community development purposes, the community "talent bank" is composed of local citizens who are from different walks of life, with business and civic interests in the community as a common denominator.

"Mix ages, education levels, personalities. Tell them what . . . problems you are having, the kinds of decisions you are looking for. Have each jot down ten changes they envision in the upcoming decade, then discuss how the changes will happen." (Popcorn 1990).

What does the staff of the Community/Economic Development Center view as some primary development trends and opportunities for small communities?

1. Communities that are perceived to be safe and secure places to live and work, particularly if they are close to larger metropolitan areas, will experience significant population growth during the next two decades. Accordingly,

innovative and effective planning for anticipated population growth will serve such communities in their attempts to capture the cultural and economic benefits which result when new residents seek quality and safety in the places where they live and work.

Opportunities

- Development that integrates residential, work, and shopping activities into a consolidated environment, i.e., a planned community, the central downtown core typical to the small town which encompasses commercial, business, educational, and religious activities.

- The development of secure pedestrian environments, particularly for children and the elderly, offers an environment conducive to residential growth.

- Community service/safety programs that involve not only public safety personnel, but all segments of the local population serve to create the sense of a safe and secure environment.

2. As the population of America ages and has more leisure time at its disposal, the day-trip will become a fixture in our nation's economy as it is in Western Europe's. Communities that offer quality locales for "day-trippers" (e.g., sightseeing, shopping, dining) will experience economic growth from the new custom of leaving the city for the day.

Opportunities:

- The development of significant local historical tours provides an initial draw for out-of-town visitors

- Proximity to larger metropolitan areas provides opportunities for economic development in small communities

3. Specialty foods and produce provide many opportunities for small towns and rural areas that have focused on agricultural development in recent years. Environmentally "secure" food production techniques will be in demand in the coming decades. Weekend farmers and seasonal flea markets will combine with "day-tripper" consuming trends to provide organically grown or unique food items. Food is perceived to be an effective indulgence, and there will be a growing national demand for safe, nutritious and attractive specialty foods.

Opportunities

- Mail order specialty foods and agricultural products, i.e., herbs, vegetables, fruits, local specialties

- Specialty markets that attract daily, weekend, or seasonal consumers

- Specialty farming, i.e., organic, hydroponic, etc.

The local leadership that undertakes economic visualization for its community will stay ahead of the game. And the game is economic competition. The small communities that thrive and grow all seem to have one common denominator. They keep their eyes on the road to the future.

Summary

This study has focused on a community development concept which our organization has cultivated and believes is critical to the economic future of American small towns. Through our research we have witnessed growing evidence of a link between the provision of unique goods, services, and amenities to small-town economic growth. A destination place exhibits strong ties to its past, its present, and its future, with leaders and citizens that are united in their commitments to community livability. Economic vitality is a keystone to an enhanced quality of life in any community.

Additionally, the following factors are strategic to the "destination" development process:

1. A willingness on the part of local citizens to think as entrepreneurs

2. An honest and prevalent community commitment to support change

3. A willingness to share the unique attributes of the community with others for the economic benefit of all participants

4. A willingness of local government to become a supportive partner

5. The community exhibits a vision, the foresight, and a risk-taking spirit necessary to diversify existing "destination" assets for the purpose of including the widest possible range of business, social, and cultural interests in the ongoing development process.

The overriding conclusion of this study is that small communities seeking continuous stability and growth must identify the elements which serve to distinguish them from other places. From that process, their economies will be ideally programmed for the development and provision of the goods and services which are unique to them. Through the utilization of community economic visualization, it is then possible to establish what products and resources are available for niche marketing.

Literature Cited

Popcorn, Faith. 1990. **The Popcorn Report: Faith Popcorn on the Future of Your Company. Your World, Your Life**. New York: Doubleday Currency. pp. 226.

Notes

***The text of this paper was excerpted from the original publication Destinations: Opportunities for Economic Development in the American Small Town, written by the Community/Economic Development Center, Mississippi State University: 1993.

The Relationship Between Community Activeness and Community Success: How do Researchers Know?

Lumane Claude
A. E. Luloff

Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802

Introduction

This study focuses on the relationship between community activeness (defined as the level of activity by community residents, leaders, and groups), and community success (defined as stability in employment, income, community services, and population over the decade of the 80s) and makes a critical test of the underlying theoretical relationship using both qualitative and quantitative data. This relationship is central to the interactional perspective of community and provides detailed insights into the role of community agency or local capacity to contribute to rural economic and social development. It is part of a larger, multi-phase research project entitled "Economic Restructuring and Rural Community Transformation" which was funded by the National Research Initiative (NRI) of the CSRS, USDA.

The larger grant focused on three objectives: (1) To determine the patterns of structural change economic, demographic, spatial, and social - at the community level in rural areas of Pennsylvania and the northeast; (2) to determine the effects of community action in the form of decisions and initiatives by community groups and other local actors in these changes in community structure; and (3) to evaluate the effects of alternative patterns of community activeness and structural changes on community well-being.

In total, *the project sought to better understand how local communities adapt to changes in order to meet the needs of residents, and as a result, contribute to an enhanced local rural development.* If agency was found to be an important criterion in success, then the lessons learned from this study could be extended to other rural communities facing similar transformations. In this presentation, we focus on Pennsylvania efforts, although much was learned about responses to changes at the county level across the entire northeastern region.

Strategy

To begin this effort, the NRI project first developed an algorithm to sort Pennsylvania's minor civil divisions (MCD) into "communities." This was accomplished in the following manner. First, each MCD was ranked according to its population size starting with the largest. The largest place was selected as the center of the community. Then, all MCDs within a 10-mile radius of this center were identified as part of this community. The procedure continued with the next, distinct largest place (i.e., it could not be included in another larger aggregation), and continued until there was no census-defined place left. As a result of this process, 212 communities were identified.

Then we separated these communities into urban and rural designations using the Census Bureau's designation of a central place locality. This procedure resulted in the identification of 173 rural communities. Map 1 indicates the location of the rural, urban, and remote sites (places that did not fall into the 10-mile range of any central place locality).

After identifying the study sites, the next major task was to learn about actions and projects undertaken by local community leaders, groups, and individuals to deal with economic, demographic, and social changes that were designed to improve community life over the last ten years. To accomplish this, we mailed a questionnaire to key informants in each of the 173 communities. These key informants were identified by making phone calls to the chief municipal officer (and/or secretary or clerk) in each community who was asked to identify specific individuals generally perceived as having considerable knowledge about community activities and situations. The people occupied the following positions: Elected local officials, e.g., mayor; a local newspaper editor; a local bank president or manager; a planning commission or economic development director or zoning officer; an industrial development director; a local chamber of commerce; and a local realtor.

We then called these individuals and asked them if they would agree to participate in the study effort. If they refused or indicated a lack of knowledge, we asked them for the name of another individual who could provide us with the kind of information we sought. This resulted in an initial sample of 1,038 key informants (each community received at least six instruments).

After the implementation of the Dillman total design strategy, we received responses from 506 key informants (49%) and from 170 of the 173 rural communities (98.3%). The survey instrument contained a battery of questions on six broad sectors of local economic and community life: (1) Jobs and income/economic base; (2) tourism and recreation; (3) natural and environmental resources; (4) human services; (5) local government; and (6) community history and identity.

To identify levels of activity - what we called activeness - we made use of the "Method of Modal Yes" to sum across respondents from each community so as to generate a community response. This system operates as follows: All unanimous responses and multiple "yes" responses are treated as true. If there are only two responses and one is "yes," then the response is treated as "yes." If there are one "yes" and two "nos," then the final response is "no." When the key informants failed to respond to a question or answered "don't know," the aggregated response became a "no." To calculate the final activeness score, responses for each community were summed across six areas identified above, and scores were recorded for each community.

Because our concern was with understanding the relationship between activeness and success, we next

Map 1.

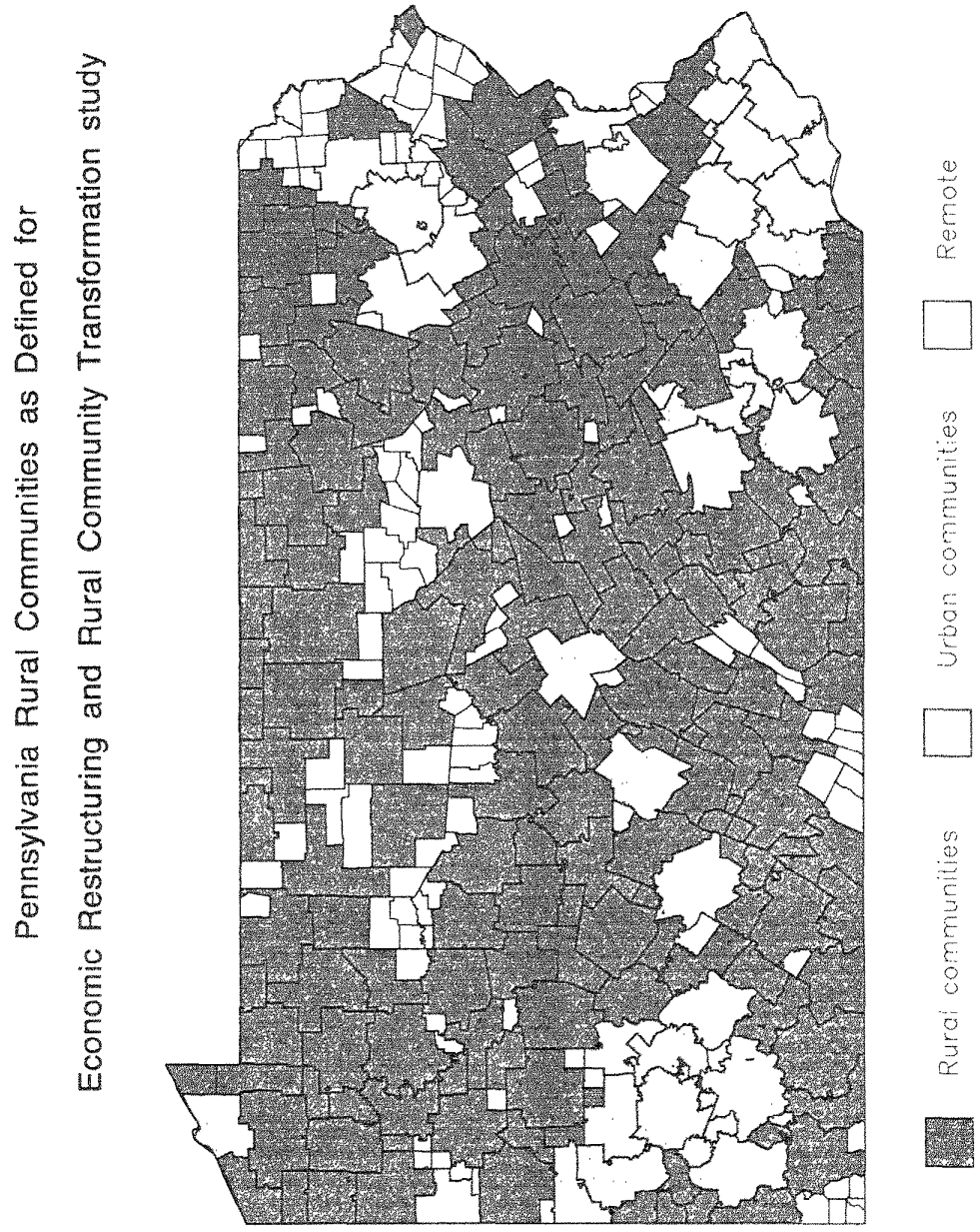
Pennsylvania Rural Communities as Defined for
Economic Restructuring and Rural Community Transformation study
Rural communities
Urban communities
Remote

Table 1a.—1990 sociodemographic characteristics and the 1980-1990 changes of the four study sites compared to the State of Pennsylvania

Variables	Communities				Pennsylvania
	Coudersport	Emporium	Liberty	Austin	
	Hi Active Hi Success	Hi Active Lo Success	Lo Active Hi Success	Lo Active Lo Success	
Population	7,185	5,547	2,554	692	11,881,643
Number of households	2,699	2,269	917	266	4,495,966
Ration of males to females	.94	96	1.04	.93	.92
Residents of 65 years old or over	1,212	1,011	352	122	1,829,106
Average family income	33,661	29,202	31,446	25,013	34,856
Poverty rate	12.44	10.62	13.83	16.53	11.21
Jobs in extractive and manufacturing	880	1,059	490	120	1,216,427
Jobs in other sectors	2,183	1,164	592	112	4,218,105
Total number of jobs	3,063	2,223	1,082	232	5,434,532
Unemployment rate	5.81	9.04	7.12	7.20	5.96

Table 1b.—1990 sociodemographic characteristics and the 1980-1990 changes of the four study sites compared to the state of Pennsylvania

Variables	Communities				Pennsylvania
	Coudersport	Emporium	Liberty	Austin	
	Percent Changes 1980 1990				
Population	1.73	-13.02	-1.24	-25.03	0.15
Jobs in extractive and manufacturing*	-2.19	- 6.69	-2.34	-20.06	-6.87
Jobs in other sectors*	11.21	3.20	17.32	- 9.42	16.39
Total number of jobs	10.02	- 9.89	14.98	-29.48	9.52
Average family income**	22.57	1.01	21.62	- 2.15	14.64

* Changes calculated as a percent of total jobs in all economic sectors in 1980.
** Changes corrected for inflation.

needed to operationalize success. To accomplish this, we made use of secondary data secured through the Bureau of Census. We focused on characteristics which would identify local stability or growth, because the state experienced essentially zero population growth (0.2%) and significant declines in natural resource-based employment and manufacturing during the decade of the 80s. We used measures of employment, income, community services, and population change to develop the success measure.

These measures of economic and demographic factors of change over the last decade are defined as success if stability or positive improvement was detected in a community. That is, as a result of economic restructuring, there was any evidence of the community being able to, for example, retain population. In other words, a community was successful if it was able to stabilize its employment and income level, maintain or expand community services, and control population out-migration over the last decade. These two measures, success and activeness, were then cross tabulated creating a 2x2 matrix.

All MCDs were then sorted into one of these four cells — high activeness, high success; high activeness, low success; low activeness, high success; low activeness, low success. Following this sorting, we opted to select for study a region which contained all four types so as to minimize regional variations and costs (all were relatively proximate to the home university). Our study communities are Austin, Coudersport, Emporium, and Liberty, all located in the north central region of Pennsylvania. Each of these sites was the subject of windshield reconnaissance, intensive case study, key and action informant interviews, and finally, household surveys.

As indicated in Tables 1a and 1b significant variations in sociodemographic and economic factors occurred across these sites. These sociodemographic and economic indicators suggest how successful or unsuccessful the communities have been by their various forms of adaptation to structural changes over the past decade.

On surface, these data suggest that the Coudersport community has managed to "turn the corner" on some of the more pressing economic difficulties that worked to reduce the vitality of many rural places in Pennsylvania during the 1980s decade. The community successfully adapted to changes in its employment structure, income level, and population. It has made a relatively smooth shift from employment in extractive and manufacturing to service industries. Furthermore, the percentage changes in population and average family income during the decade exceeded the state's.

The Liberty community experienced both losses and gains in its efforts to keep up with the structural changes of the 1980s. On one hand, the community was unable to stabilize its population base, as indicated by its 1.24% loss (as compared with the state's positive but small growth rate of 0.15%). Similarly, the 1990 unemployment and poverty rates were slightly higher than the state's despite improvements in average family income and jobs in the area. On the other hand, the larger regional trend in employment, as measured by industrial diversity, was impressive. The community's loss of a number of jobs in the older extractive and manufacturing sectors was well compensated by growth in the service sectors.

These patterns of restructuring make Liberty and Coudersport examples of successful communities according to the NRI developed typology. Both communities are considered successful rural communities for their overall achievements in adapting to economic changes. Their success stories could prove informative for other rural communities whose socioeconomic structures were badly shaken during the 1980-1990 decade.

On the other hand, neither Austin nor Emporium has been successful either in retaining their population or in securing jobs for their residents. Both of these communities' local economies experienced major shocks during the 1980s, suffering losses in the traditional extractive and manufacturing sectors and total jobs.

Austin suffered the more serious hardships, losing about three times as many jobs as Emporium. The severity of this problem is highlighted by the fact that the state averaged a 9.52% gain in jobs during the same period. Not surprising, these communities suffered population losses over the decade and had higher unemployment in 1990. Thus, Austin and Emporium are, by their various forms of adaptation to structural changes, low success communities.

To explore these changes in greater detail, we took the additional step of conducting key and action informant interviews in each site. These interviews were designed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of patterns of community activeness and reasons behind local efforts to adapt to the pressures of economic restructuring and to promote community well-being.

Prospective key and action informants were chosen after conducting the windshield reconnaissances and brief visit to each study site to analyze physical structures; identify, review, and subscribe to local newspapers; peruse area telephone books; casually talk to a few local residents; and generally attempt to get a feel for the community.

Initial key informants were identified on the basis of their occupational positions in the community. They included senior local government officials, representatives of the news media, local business owners, church leaders, and leaders of some minority and civic groups (Table 2). Their names and addresses were retrieved either from local telephone book directories or businesses and groups which were obtained from the county planning offices. Action informants, on the other hand, were principal actors connected to specific actions in the community who were identified through key informant interviews.

Key informants from the four study sites were interviewed with a predesigned instrument using questions similar to those used in the mail survey. The major difference was that the face-to-face interviews were open ended so that more details could be gathered, including the names of action informants. The instruments were designed to measure levels of community activeness and to estimate the role of local efforts during the 1980s related to changing structural, social, and economic characteristics of the communities. Within the four communities, 80 informants were interviewed.

A content analysis of information provided by these key and action informants helped us to understand significant community efforts and changes made over the last 14 years in the areas of (1) jobs and economy; (2) tourism, recreation, and celebrations; (3) environmental resources, municipal services, and infrastructure; and (4) human services.

Three broad questions were addressed. First, how has each community been active and why? Second, what types of forces (outside contacts, luck, gifts, historical structures, or natural advantages) make a difference in maintaining local actions? And finally, how does information obtained through the key and action informant interviews inform the NRI developed typology of high or low active communities?

Coudersport

How have Coudersport's government officials, local groups, and citizens been active in promoting community well-being and why? The Potter County government, which is located in Coudersport, has a long history of allocating grant money to help local businesses expand and be competitive. County government has partially financed tourism promotion, mostly through Potter County Recreation Incorporated (PCRI). They have also found the formula for saving taxpayers' money by providing a consolidated human service delivery system at the cheapest price.

However, the community was very fortunate in that its excellent aging department reflected the former aging director's love for local senior citizens and commitment to training her staff and updating the services delivered. Thus,

Table 2.—Number of key and action informants interviewed in the four Pennsylvania rural communities

County Informants	Coudersport	Emporium	Liberty	Austin
Town and county officials	3	5	1	3
County directors of public offices	7	6	3	2
Leaders of civic and cultural organizations	3	5	2	2
Owners and managers of local business	4	8	5	3
Media representatives and town historians	3	2	2	1
Educational and religious leaders	0	5	4	1
Total:	20	31	17	12

* Variations are due mainly to the availability of informants during the interview periods and the abilities of interviewers to contact informants and schedule as many interviews as possible before the fieldwork period.

consolidation was only serendipitously related to performance for this particular human service agency.

Concerned citizens' groups were formed to oppose several things including the siting of waste facilities in the community; organized "skinhead" gatherings; military planes flying overhead; and members of the Gospel Tabernacle Assembly from attaining key positions in the community. The county recycling program is a joint effort of many groups which share different responsibilities. And, both local groups and citizens have contributed time and money to support the charity organization known as Christmas House.

Over the last 14 years, the Coudersport community's diverse economy - based on farming, forestry, small business, retail sales, health care delivery, crafts, manufacturing, government services, and tourism - was supplemented by the considerable expansion of two major businesses: the television cable company known as Adelphia and Cole's Memorial Hospital. Both have contributed to modifying the socioeconomic structure of the community as well as the residents' visions about their futures in the community.

The forces that make a difference in maintaining Coudersport's local levels of activity are many. First, since the community is centered around a county seat, it has benefitted from the presence of government offices and thus more direct government involvement. Second, Coudersport did not experience large out-migration during the 1980's. It also did not experience a major shift in employment base, and enjoyed an expansion of opportunities through the growth of its two dominant employers (both in the service sector). Third, the community, although rife with controversy, has found ways to defend common causes on different occasions, and cares for its needy in special ways. Fourth, a sense of community and communion is celebrated through regular organized activities such as the Maple Festival and Farm City Day, and is also witnessed in its operation of the Lumber Museum.

However, it would be naive to accept Coudersport's community actions solely on face value. For example, while it is clear that the community has benefitted from the presence of Adelphia and Cole's Memorial Hospital, neither business was started as a community project nor did either invest in the community for altruistic reasons. Rather, they have been progressively involved in ameliorating different aspects of community life primarily to secure the future of their business. At the same time, the community has not only benefitted from these involvements, but has cultivated them. The presence of both Adelphia and the hospital has been inspirational to community residents and profitable to the county as a whole.

Austin

How have Austin's government officials, local groups, and residents been active in influencing community well-being and why? The Austin community, being defined outside the county seat, does not have a direct governmental hand to help guide its development. However, local groups and citizens have worked together to improve the community's well-being to the best of their abilities, given the circumstances under which they have operated since 1980. This includes the fact that the state Department of Environmental Resources (DER) mandated that no further construction be allowed in Austin until it upgraded its sewer and water lines. This created a situation which prevented new businesses from moving into the community, and may have even prevented them from considering such a move. In addition, the community suffered damages from several natural disasters that occurred early in its history that they have never adequately recovered from (including a flood as a result of the breaking of their dam).

First, consider that the Austin school district, despite being underfunded, has an average of 45% of its graduates attend college. While in college, the students are offered the necessary support to overcome culture shock and to finish their degrees. Further, the school superintendent has instituted a special program to accommodate teenage mothers and encourage them to graduate from high school.

Second, the Austin Pride Committee actively looks for ways to revitalize the community by addressing its problems. For instance, they obtained a grant to replace the water system, and another was about to be granted during the time of the interviews to install a sewage system. Third, the Austin Memorial Dam Committee has taken many steps toward constructing a memorial park around the debris of the community's old dam. Fourth, fishing and hunting are aggressively promoted by the community sportsmen's tavern known as the Folk Lodge. Fifth, the Christmas House, a county-wide organization, and local churches regularly assist the needy. Finally, the active fire department not only takes care of the local elderly but also organizes annual celebrations in which the sense of community solidarity and belonging is expressed.

Austin's high degree of social cohesion is translated through the actions of its community's residents and groups. The community is facing many problems and county officials and residents are well aware of them. However, the forces that make a difference in maintaining local actions in Austin are the people of Austin themselves and their uplifted pride.

The community is very active and quite alive despite the series of disasters it has suffered over the years, including DER's mandate which prohibited construction of any sort since 1980. Rather than complain or give up, the residents of this community look hard for ways not only to survive but also to succeed. This reflects a historical animation among townsfolk - these are hardy people with an uplifted spirit who have never accepted passivity or silence for an answer. At the time of our interviews, we witnessed the undefeated spirit that officials of Coudersport characterized as "never dying."

Liberty

How have Liberty's community government officials, local groups, and residents been active in promoting residents' well-being and why? The Liberty community area is defined outside of both Tioga and Lycoming county seats. Therefore, the community does not benefit from direct influences usually associated with the presence of governmental offices and services. Furthermore, the fact that its sustenance base consists of three somewhat successful elements (farming, commercial, and residential - i.e., it is a bedroom community), local groups and residents' actions tend to be concentrated in specific areas of the community.

The most significant local actions that have promoted the community residents' well-being include the following: Despite the failure of the borough government to become involved when the only factory in town, Wundeis, considered closing, several citizens got involved and called the main company in order to voice local concerns. Second, the owner of the community's only hardware store opened a community recreation center for younger people in the area. Third, local government has actively looked for funds to maintain the community's clean physical appearance. Fourth, the community churches, especially the Lutheran church, have served the needy and elderly in special ways. Finally, the local fire company together with local churches and volunteer groups have planned and organized the most celebrated historical event in the community, the Annual Block House Festival.

In general, as many informants described it, Liberty is best seen as a very laid back community. People are satisfied with the way the community is and they do not share a vision for a better future. The informants expressed that laid back attitude when they indicated that they really did not think Liberty had any real problems. In a sense, their perception of the community's problems seemed to restrict their planning capacity, and reflected the old dictum "What we perceive as real, is real in its consequences."

Emporium

How have Emporium's government officials, local groups and citizens been actively promoting community well-being and why? The Emporium community's defined area includes the Cameron county seat, and it has enjoyed and prospered from the influence of county government operations. For instance, the county government has given tax breaks enabling firms to stay in business. It has worked with the Tourist Promotion Association to advertise the region's beauty and the different activities and festivals. It has also partially funded the activities of The Shade Tree Commission.

County government has also shared residents' concerns about Gypsy Moth infestation and disseminated information in order to manage potential problems. Municipal services and infrastructures have always been updated, providing the community with well organized and diversified human services. Finally, the government, local groups, and the Chamber of Commerce have been involved in organizing annual celebrations such as Super Weekends, Tom Mix Festival, and Old Home Week parade.

Emporium local groups and residents, on the other hand, were also quite active. They created the major voluntary organization, The Shade Tree Commission, to protect community trees. Narx Narby, a high school teacher, designed and instituted two programs, "Freedom Week" and "American Free Enterprise" to involve community youth in uplifting activities. County residents are grateful for his efforts because crime and substance abuse in the community has been lowered. Residents were also successful in uncovering a molester of boys in their community. This incident led to the community gaining federal, state, and local funds for programs designed to address and prevent this problem from occurring again. These successful actions resulted in the delivery of a range of human services designed to assist families with a variety of needs, and created new opportunities for youth and family activities where none existed before.

All things considered, the forces that make a difference in maintaining local actions in Emporium are good luck, the government, and the people. Emporium, after losing its dominant employer, Sylvania, was fortunate since entrepreneurs from St. Mary's emerged with new job opportunities (powdered metals). In addition, the community

has benefitted from the "Emporium Foundation Fund" - a fund created by former wealthy residents who allocated their resources to "community development" activities - and from the knowledge of many former residents who have returned "home" and now actively support the community.

The government in Emporium works like a big family since people in key positions work in collaboration with each other in many community programs. And, finally, we also need to recognize that the people of Emporium have worked hard to protect the uniqueness of their community, as in the operation of the Little Museum in downtown Emporium.

Conclusion

Information obtained from local informants tells us that Coudersport is a very active community because government officials, local groups, and citizens share the responsibilities of promoting the community's life. Their decisions and initiatives have influenced the course of changes in the community. In general, their actions have served the well-being of the community as a whole instead of serving the sole interests of some special-interest groups. Besides, Coudersport residents should be given credit for taking advantage of the presence of Adelphia and the hospital to rebuild their community. This community, though full of controversies, informs us that its activeness is mainly motivated by a diversified and concerned citizenry who, in trying to address government failures, are willing to take a leadership role in facing community responsibilities.

The key and action informant interviews taught us that the Austin community's apparent passivity is cosmetic in many cases. Furthermore, passivity is relative. For the people of Austin, poor economic conditions are meaningless compared to the spirit of cohesion and the strong sense of "we" that makes the undoable look bright and worth trying. Austin is a special case of a poor but active rural community.

Liberty is a low active community based on personal observations and the information given by the informants. However, being a low active community only means that Liberty as a farming, residential, and bedroom community does not have to work hard satisfying its residents. For example, residents' demands for leisure, shopping, work, and health are met elsewhere. Thus, nothing other than a quiet comfortable place to live is required. Some of the forces that help maintain this type of low level of local actions are related to the prevailing economic conditions in the community. For example, Liberty's farms are diversified, its residents have good or fair jobs elsewhere, the local lumber industry is healthy, the two major truck companies are "good old established town businesses," and the local school district, bank, and post office are steady employers. In a sense, what else should residents worry about when they live in a peaceful place with active churches to meet social and spiritual needs, to serve the economically disadvantaged?

Information obtained from key and action informant interviews confirmed that Emporium is a very active community mainly because of government involvement in diverse activities for attaining common goals. The community residents have contributed in shaping their community to enhance the overall well-being.

How Do Researchers Know?

Our theoretical typology suggested the following:

- High Active High Success - Coudersport
- High Active Low Success - Emporium
- Low Active High Success - Liberty
- Low Active Low Success - Austin

By going to the field and conducting intensive ethnographic case studies in each of these four communities, we were able to discover that, in general, the typology worked quite well for what it set out to do - namely, differentiate communities on the basis of activeness and success. For example, if we contrast Coudersport with Austin -- both pure types (high on both; low on both) the differences are real and stark. Coudersport was high active and successful in all measures we used. On the other hand, Austin was low active and unsuccessful on our measures.

Further, explanation of these relationships was uncovered through the case studies. For example, Coudersport's high success was due mainly to its diversified economy - i.e., it has not been dependent on any one industry for a long time. Indeed, it scored high on all six investigated areas, and was characterized by high levels of activity from government, citizens, and groups. Thus, local economic restructuring did not have the kind of impact here that it had in places which were characterized by a higher degree of dependence on particular industries or by lower levels of citizen, government, and/or group involvement. In addition, the expansion of Adelphia and Cole Memorial Hospital enhanced this community's success.

Austin was typed low success low active reflecting the fact that it has lost many of its businesses during this period, experienced very low involvement by local or county government, suffered a deteriorating infrastructure, and was placed under a DER mandate against construction.

Our two non-pure types, high active-low success, the Emporium community, and low active - high success, the Liberty community, present a different situation.

Emporium's low success is mainly due to the loss of Sylvania, the largest and major industry in the community for many years. Its loss essentially prohibited a quick recovery since it accounted for a disproportionate number of jobs in the community. On the other hand, the people, government, and groups were all very active in an attempt to build on the strong sense of community evidenced by its Tree City USA title, and numerous community activities.

Liberty, which was high success low active, reflects its diversification, including long-term established businesses and new farms, which when coupled to its emerging residential or bedroom community status, allowed it to

maintain a stable economic base. The residents of the community were not active since they were quite satisfied with what was going on.

The theoretical typology, however, did not capture the community building element of activeness. For example, in the case of Austin, we found that its failure to achieve success reflected the fact that it was under DER mandates against construction until it met sewer and water requirements, and that the community had not yet completely recovered from its early natural disasters. Yet, despite these problems, the community was quite active, and its people had never stopped looking for ways to improve their community. Here citizens and groups, without government help, have taken a critical role in fostering a spirit of cohesion and solidarity which is recognized by others calling them "the town that won't die."

Similar details could be provided for the other communities. The point is that without going into the field to gather real time data from discussions with real people, our analysis would have been incomplete. The only way for researchers to know is to ask. They cannot get the answers from secondary data, or even survey data; what is needed is the existential experience of face-to-face communications. Without the latter there is no flesh on the bones.

Section II
Rural Development Research Methodology

A Critique of Research on the Economic Impacts of Recreation

Donald B. K. English

USDA Forest Service
Southern Research Station
Athens, GA 30602-2044

Introduction

Estimates of the economic impacts of recreation are an important tool used by policymakers in deciding the best use of public lands, particularly when a primary goal for the managing agency is rural development. The general techniques used in these analyses are reasonably well established. However, unlike research for economic values of recreation, critical reviews of impact techniques and their theoretical underpinnings have not been readily available in the literature. This paper is a first attempt to address that need. The paper reviews the general approach used in deriving impact estimates, and highlights issues or areas of concern with that approach. Potential remedies and avenues of research are identified that could improve the methods and results.

Current Methods

Most analyses of the economic impacts of visitation to a recreation site follow a general formula similar to that outlined by Alward and Lofting (1985). Typically, there is an onsite survey that collects some basic information about a random sample of current users, including their home address. Data on expenditures made in connection with the trip are collected in a survey mailed to the individuals' home after they have completed their trip. The expenditure survey usually asks how much was spent by that person on a series of goods and services, including gasoline, lodging, entry fees, restaurants, and so on. In many cases, the questions ask specifically about purchases made in a defined geographic area.

Next, a series of adjustments to the sample and data are made. The result of these adjustments is a sample of people whose expenditures reflect new money entering the local economy caused by visiting the recreation site under study (Bergstrom et al 1990, Johnson and Moore 1993, Dawson et al 1993). Sample adjustments include deletion of those people whose money would still have ended up in the local economy. Data adjustments include correcting for multiple-site trips, putting spending on a per person or per unit time basis, and/or making geographic allocations for spending such as that made while traveling to the site that may or may not have been in the local region. A vector of average expenditures per trip is generated for each user type or stratum in the remaining sample.

A model of the economy under study is obtained. Usually, the model is a linear one, such as an input-output model. The mean for each expenditure item is allocated across the sectors of the economy. Final demand effects for each sector are obtained by summing allocations across all expenditures. The vector of final demand is applied to the economic model, and the results estimate the impacts per visitor. Multiplying by an appropriate estimate of visitation yields total economic impacts.

Problems and Concerns

Most of the problems or concerns with the current state of recreation economic impact research are either theoretical or econometric. Some problems have elements of both types embedded in them. Theoretical issues deal with how the methods or assumptions are tied to the economic theory that underlies the analysis. Econometric issues deal with the use of appropriate data manipulation, summarization, and extrapolation in developing impact estimates.

The purpose of estimating economic impacts is to understand what would happen to an economy if a recreation site were closed down, expanded, built, or otherwise modified to increase or decrease the number of one or more types of visitors and the associated spending in that economy (English and Bergstrom 1994). The economic theory behind impact analysis consists of a two-stage household production process. Site visitation is a result of households maximizing their utility, subject to time and income constraints, over the available choices of recreation sites and associated quality. Visitor spending arises from households choosing what to buy and where as they attempt to minimize the total costs of producing a recreation trip of a desired quality level to the chosen site.

Not all respondents from the onsite or mail surveys are necessarily of interest to an impact analysis. Selection of responses as being within the population of interest are determined by assumptions about how these households would react under the proposed change to the recreation site. For example, residents of the local economy are usually excluded from impact analyses. In the case of a reduction in site availability, such exclusion implies that locals would substitute another recreation trip to a site in the region, rather than go to an extra-regional site. If a site is being improved, locals would be assumed to not shift any trips from sites outside the region to the improved site.

Visitors on multiple site trips may spend a significant amount of money in an economy that is not tied to the site of interest. This is particularly true if visiting the study site was not the primary purpose for the recreation trip. In most studies, methods for allocating spending across sites are ad hoc, although usually intuitively sensible. The purpose of these procedures is to eliminate from the expenditure vector any spending that is not part of the marginal contribution of the study site to local spending patterns. In any case, an explicit consideration of the link between these allocation procedures and the background economic model and the implied assumptions about visitor behavior has seldom been done.

Demand curves for site visitation have been frequently estimated via the travel cost method (TCM). However, such

site demand analyses are usually not explicitly included in impact analyses. Rather, the usual situation is complete closure of the site, and an assumed loss of all trips. Individual TCM models could be developed from the expenditure data used for impact analysis. A complicating factor is that price definitions used for TCM often do not have well defined relationships to expenditure patterns.

Sampling plans usually ensure a random sample of onsite visitor contacts. However, response rates to the mail survey that contains expenditure data vary widely, from about 30 percent (Cordell, et al. 1990), to over 80 percent (Dawson, et al. 1993). As a result, response or sample selection bias in expenditure patterns is a potentially important issue. Many studies treat the expenditure patterns from the mail response subsample as fully representative and eschew these bias analyses. Only if nonresponse is independent of processes that generate expenditure amounts in the local region will the average of expenditures from the mail sample be unbiased (Heckman 1979).

Point estimates for both economic value and economic impacts are highly useful for resource management and policymaking. However, researchers who estimate consumer surplus for recreation resources have recognized the importance of understanding confidence regions for resulting estimates (Kling 1991, Adamowicz, et al. 1989). Analogous research for economic impact estimates have not been reported in the literature.

Spending patterns on the individual items in the vector of expenditures are not mutually independent. Economic theory indicates that trip spending results from a household production process. However, that process is not well understood. Different spending items such as food or transportation may be at best imperfect substitutes. Such relationships complicate procedures used to correct for sample selection and to perform covariance analyses.

Solutions and Future Research

Continued development of a theoretical model for analyzing expenditure patterns and the causal behavior is absolutely essential. Some preliminary work done by the author (English and Bergstrom 1994) can serve as a starting point. Explicit ties to trip demand functions, examining the roles of site and activity substitution, and exploring the nature of the input purchase patterns of trip production functions would all greatly advance the needed theoretic base. In particular, a unifying theory between TCM and impact analysis would go a long way in putting both major economic measures on a common basis.

Related research would include examination of the agglomerative role of site development in recreation demand for a region. Research in consumer purchase behavior has shown that concentration of stores in one area causes a more than linear increase in demand. The same may be true for recreation visitation. Another area would be to extend research on visitors' substitution patterns for a given site. Correctly modeling appropriate substitutes is important for determining economic impacts, and economic value (Johnson and Moore 1993). The issue of substitute sites could provide the most important link between measures of economic impacts and economic value.

Onsite surveys need to collect information sufficient to allow analysis of nonresponse. Examples of important onsite data can include distance traveled, trip length, main destination and/or purpose, and income. These variables are important because they may have a bearing on the amount of money spent in the local region. In addition, existing datasets could be re-examined in order to evaluate the extent of this potential problem, and the possible biases in past results.

Treating trip-related expenditures as a multivariate set of items generated by a production function is another essential step in developing improved impact estimates. Exploring the nature of the multivariate distribution is essential to developing confidence intervals for impact estimates, or correcting for sample selection biases. Modeling expenditure patterns as a function of trip-related variables such as activity, distance traveled, or other would also be fruitful for policy analysis. For example, understanding the relationship between length of stay and spending is necessary to evaluate the efficacy of policies designed to entice current visitors to stay longer.

Most economic impact analyses are undertaken as *ex ante* assistance for policymaking. Few researchers or managers have money to do a follow up study to test the accuracy of the predicted economic changes. If, for example, discrete changes in visitation levels cause predictable structural shifts in economic structure, something assumed not to happen with input-output models, then biases in predicted outcomes may occur. Discovering the nature and extent of these biases would only be apparent via a combined *ex ante- ex post* study.

Conclusions

This paper has presented a first look at some central areas for improvement in estimating economic impacts of recreation visitation and site management. At the heart of many of the areas is a need for more development in the economic theory that supports the analysis. Household production theory has been used to explain recreation trip demand. Further extension to include trip input purchase decisions and substitution is warranted. In addition, many of the methods used to massage the survey data are more naive than is appropriate. Incorporating a number of the methods used in economic valuation via TCM could play a large part in moving recreation impact estimation forward.

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The Doing of Rural Development Research

A. E. Luloff
Professor of Rural Sociology

Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802

Overview

It seems almost obvious to state, up-front, that there are as many ways of conducting rural development research as there are definitions of rural development. That said, however, it is important to note that doing such research, and conducting it correctly, are two very different things. As a rural sociologist, I have always been struck by the fact that the discipline, and its sister - sociology - have been marked by high ceilings and low floors. With such latitude, it is not surprising that so many studies passed off as research fail under inspection to be very good at much of anything. This problem is compounded by two factors: (1) the increasing competitive and shrinking support environment which makes access to resources all the more difficult; and (2) the almost frivolous manner in which researchers become "specialists" in a given area. In my opinion the HALO EFFECT is alive and well in academics—given enough time, almost everyone thinks they can get up the learning curve of any area and be an instant expert in that subject matter.

Consider how often surveys are conducted. I would guess that, if asked, more than half of you would indicate you had participated in the design, conduct, and analysis of a survey. Yet, I would also be willing to bet that a far smaller percentage had any formal training in the subject. And, when you stop to think how many surveys are being conducted and how often we as citizens are asked to cooperate— via phone, mail, or face-to-face—it isn't surprising that overall response rates are falling, confidence in results is growing weaker, and we are becoming more suspect of such studies.

This is not to say that I am in favor of impregnable boundaries of rigid gatekeeping activities around various subject matters - the conduct of surveys included. Indeed, I view interchange and differences as the soul of scientific advancement. But, when people with little background in an area - including rural development - begin doing research without at least a passing familiarity with the extant literature, including its major methods, approaches, and findings, it is not surprising that much confusion results.

I welcome this opportunity to discuss with you some of the approaches we use in our rural development research efforts at Penn State. Over the past thirty some years, our focus has been interdisciplinary. This perhaps reflects the physical location of rural sociologists and rural development, resource, and agricultural economists in the same building. However, being integrated in the same building and department does not mean we necessarily had to interact. To do the latter, we had to find common ground. We did. Our concern for the quality of life of the people and places of rural Pennsylvania and the United States, and increasingly internationally, brought us together. Apparently this was enough, for we have been able to overcome usual disciplinary barriers which include different research languages, different choices of levels and units of analysis, and different preferences for sources of data.

Upon reflection, these differences might be our strength, for when we tackle rural development problems, we bring multiple talents to the table. Indeed, it led us to create the Center for Economic and Community Development at Penn State. This center provides a focal point for efforts which address rural economic and community development; augments interaction among citizens, government officials, students, and faculty interested in this area; and fosters interdisciplinary communication and collaboration among faculty members and others with rural economic and community development interests. It is also quite popular, with more than 23 members, including 20 of 38 in its home department; a newsletter subscribed to by more than 700 individuals, local governments, and citizens; several research projects; and regularly responds to requests for policy input by state governments and legislatures.

The CECD Approach

In a nutshell, our approach can best be described as multidisciplinary, with a decided focus on multiple methods and measurement. We believe that rural *development is* far too complex to be adequately captured by the use of only one variable or measure and/or by one method of gathering data.

Take for example our National Research Initiative Project entitled "Economic Restructuring and Rural Community Transformation." In this effort, three specific objectives were outlined: (1) Determine the patterns of structural change - economic, demographic, spatial, and social - at the community level in rural areas of the northeastern United States; (2) Determine the effects of community action on the form of decisions and initiatives by community groups and other local actors on these changes in community structure; and (3) Evaluate the effects of alternative patterns of community activeness and structural changes on community well-being.

To address these concerns, we outlined a 3-year strategy which incorporated broad conceptualization and measurement strategies. Team players (rural development economists, rural sociologists, and a sociologist) brought a variety of skills and interests to the tackling of these problems. What each shared was an interest in addressing the research questions in the most parsimonious and efficient manner possible.

Objective 1: Macro Approach

Our approach to the first objective was multifaceted. First, we assembled data on the 299 counties in the Northeast for the 1950-1990 period. This required identifying the relevant

sources of data, transferring them, and finally concatenating them into one file which would allow us to track changes in the demographic, economic, and social structural bases of each county. Critical to this analysis was the development of a classification scheme for sorting counties into types: Here, we used total employment in each decennial year (50-90) as the base criteria (Maps 1, 2, & 3). Then, counties were labeled Agriculture, Forestry, or Fisheries if more than 20% were so employed; Mining if >20%; Manufacturing if >25%; Producer Services if >25%; and Ubiquitous Services if >50%. By so doing, we were also able to demonstrate that a shift to a service sector economy had begun in the Northeast much earlier than in the nation, and that manufacturing industries still predominated, and, in fact, grew in many rural counties in this region. Detailed work on changes in and among the different county types is now being conducted.

Objective 1: Micro Approach

The results of this broad, macro analysis framed our work on the impacts of such transformations more locally, i.e., in Pennsylvania. First, we needed to define our relevant universe. Our approach was to develop an algorithm which clustered all rural places in the state. Borrowing from central place theory, which suggests that a community should include a center of concentrated population and economic activity together with its surrounding hinterland, we took the highest-population place (minor civil division (mcd) - townships, boroughs, cities) in the state as the center of the community, and all mcd's within ten miles of its center were assigned to that community. Then the next-highest-population place (not included in the previously defined community) was taken as the second community, and all mcd's within ten miles of its center (and not included in the previously defined community) were assigned to it. This process continued until no Census defined "places" remained. As a result, 212 community areas were identified. These were then assigned rural or urban status in accordance with the Census Bureau-defined status of their central place.

Of the 212 places, 173 were rural and the focus of the project. These places included 61% of the state's mcd's, and covered in excess of 80% of the land area in Pennsylvania. Excluded from further analysis were the 39 urban sites (33% of the state's mcd's) and an additional 5% of the mcd's which were not part of any Census-defined community area. The latter places were designated "remote areas." Visual inspection of the resulting communities, and some preliminary geographic information system analysis, were used to confirm these groupings.

Once we had defined the areas of study, our group met to develop a questionnaire which would be used in each place to identify the roles of local citizens and officials in directing or influencing these patterns of change. Concomitant with the development of the survey instrument, we made phone calls to each community to identify key knowledgeables - that is, key informants (including county commissioners, planners, extension agents, leaders of commerce and industry, newspaper editors, local historians, and leaders of agricultural, environmental, and civic/community groups, for example) - to whom we could send the questionnaire for completion. After checking with these people, on average we attempted to identify seven in each community, we created our mailing list. The survey asked questions about six broad areas: jobs and income/economic base; tourism and recreation; natural and environmental resources; human services; local government; and community history and identity. Following the use of a total design methodology, which incorporates repeated mailings to sampled individuals, we received usable responses from 171 of the 173 communities (98.3%) and had an overall response rate for individuals of 49% (506 of 1,037 key informants). This data was then coded, keypunched, verified, and entered into a database for analysis.

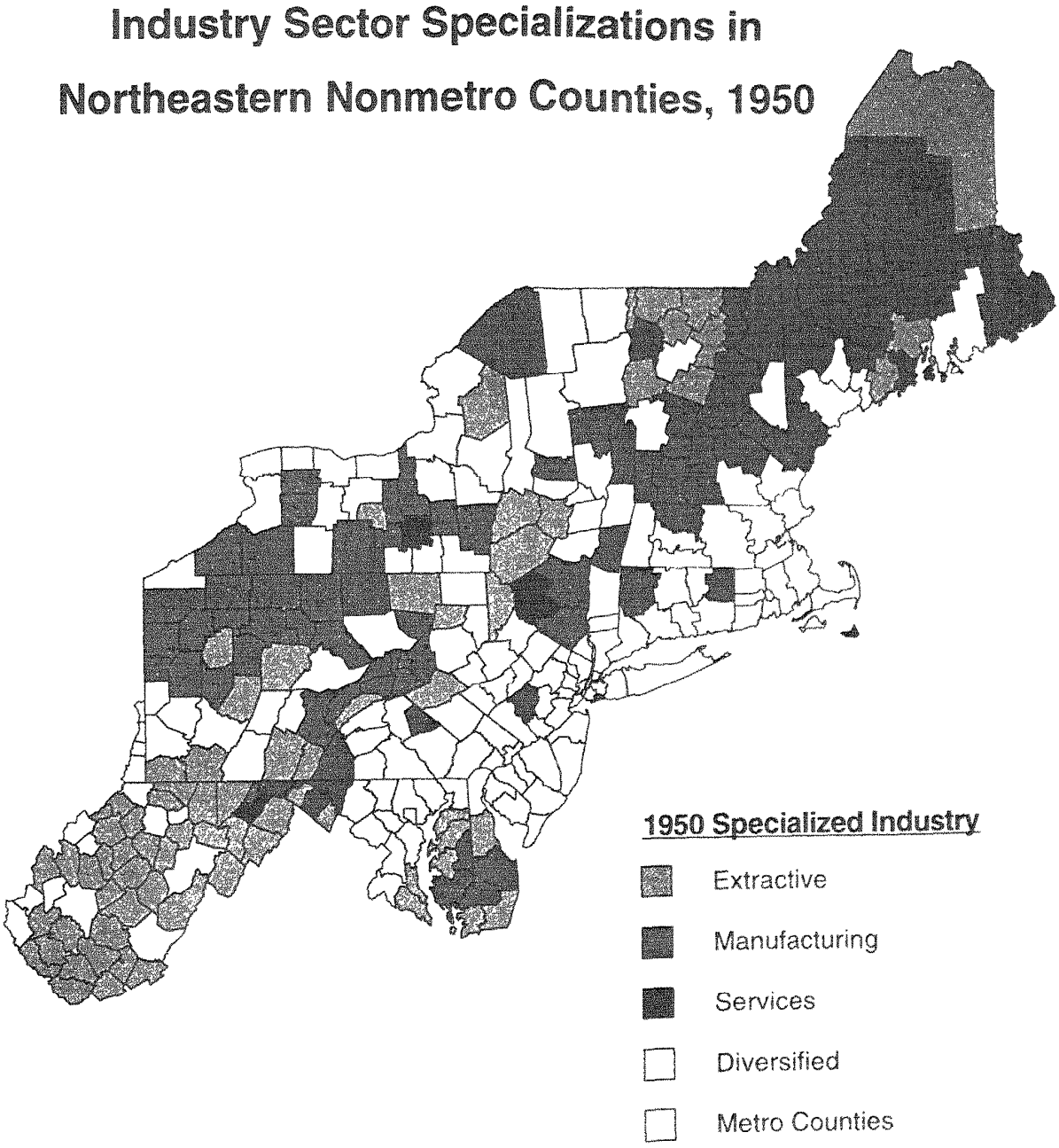
Objective 2

To determine the effects of community action on changes in community structure across these six broad areas, we created a framework which used two sources of data - secondary (census information on the communities) and primary (key informant surveys) and which assessed two critical factors: (1) Success - measured using measures as change or stability in employment, income, community service, and population calculated from the 1980 and 1990 census data aggregated across the defined community area. If stability or positive improvement was detected (i.e., if a community stabilized its employment and income level, maintained or expanded community services, and controlled out-migration over the last decade) the community was defined as successful; and (2) Activeness - defined as the number of initiatives taken over the past decade to influence or improve the community in each of the six areas Activeness was computed as the sum of activities, across areas, for each community using the "Method of Modal Yes." In this method, all unanimous responses and multiple "yeses" are treated the same. For example, if there are only two responses and one is "yes," the response is treated as "yes." If there is one "yes" and two "no's," then the final response is "no." Adoption of the "yes" as opposed to "no" approach results in a more liberal assessment of local activity (although preliminary analysis with a "no" model resulted in few substantive differences).

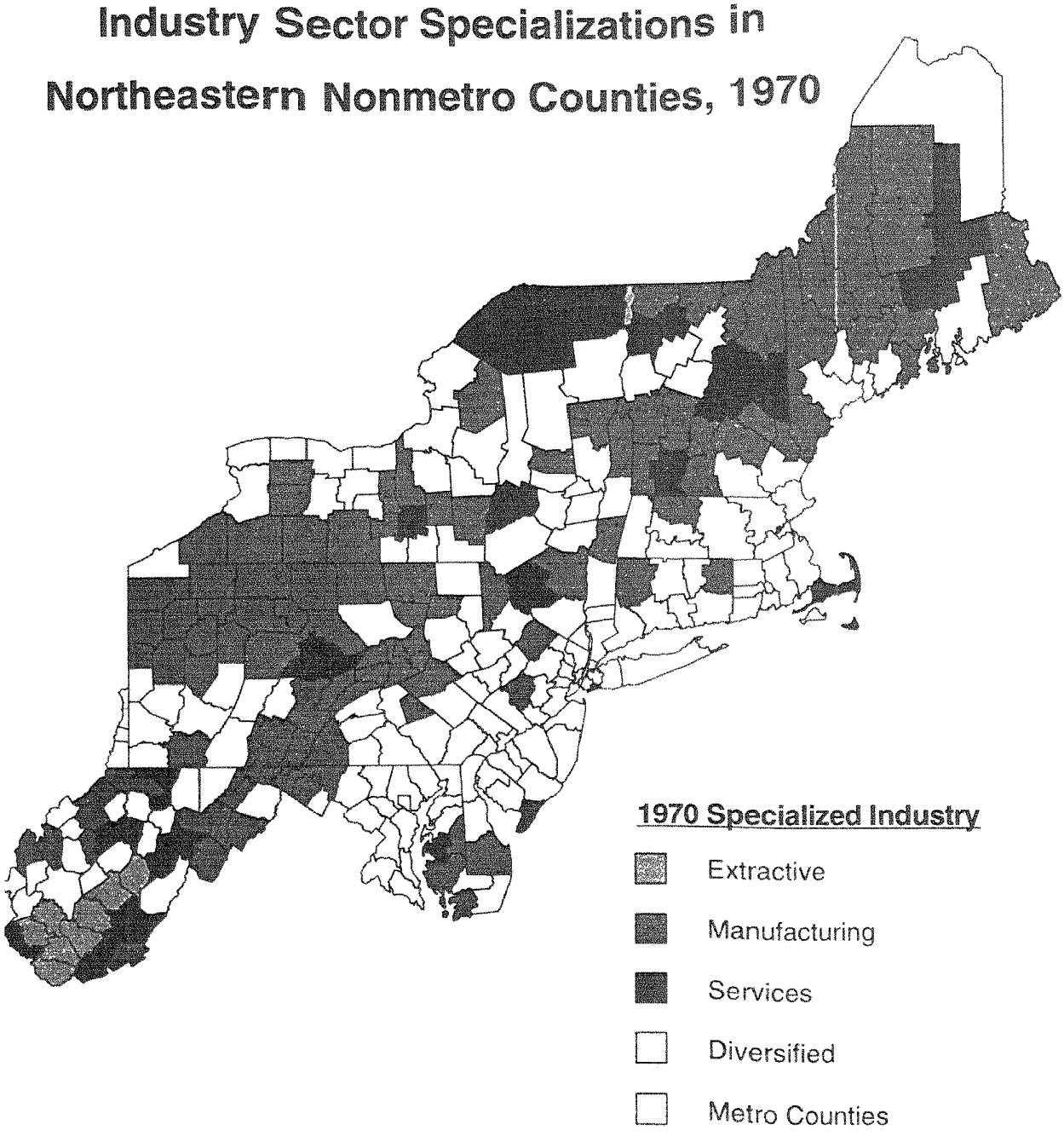
We then sorted the communities into a 2X2 matrix (activeness by success). After identifying where each community fell, we plotted them on a map, using different colors for each cell of the matrix. This procedure allowed us to physically locate them. Research teams were then sent to conduct windshield reconnaissance in several communities in each cell. After they returned, the entire research team met to discuss selection of four sites - one per cell - for intensive ethnographic study. It was decided to minimize regional differences, and of course costs, among types by picking a cluster of communities in one area of the state. This led to a choice of four communities located in the north central part of Pennsylvania.

Once the four sites were selected for analysis, the intensive case studies were begun. This entailed making phone calls

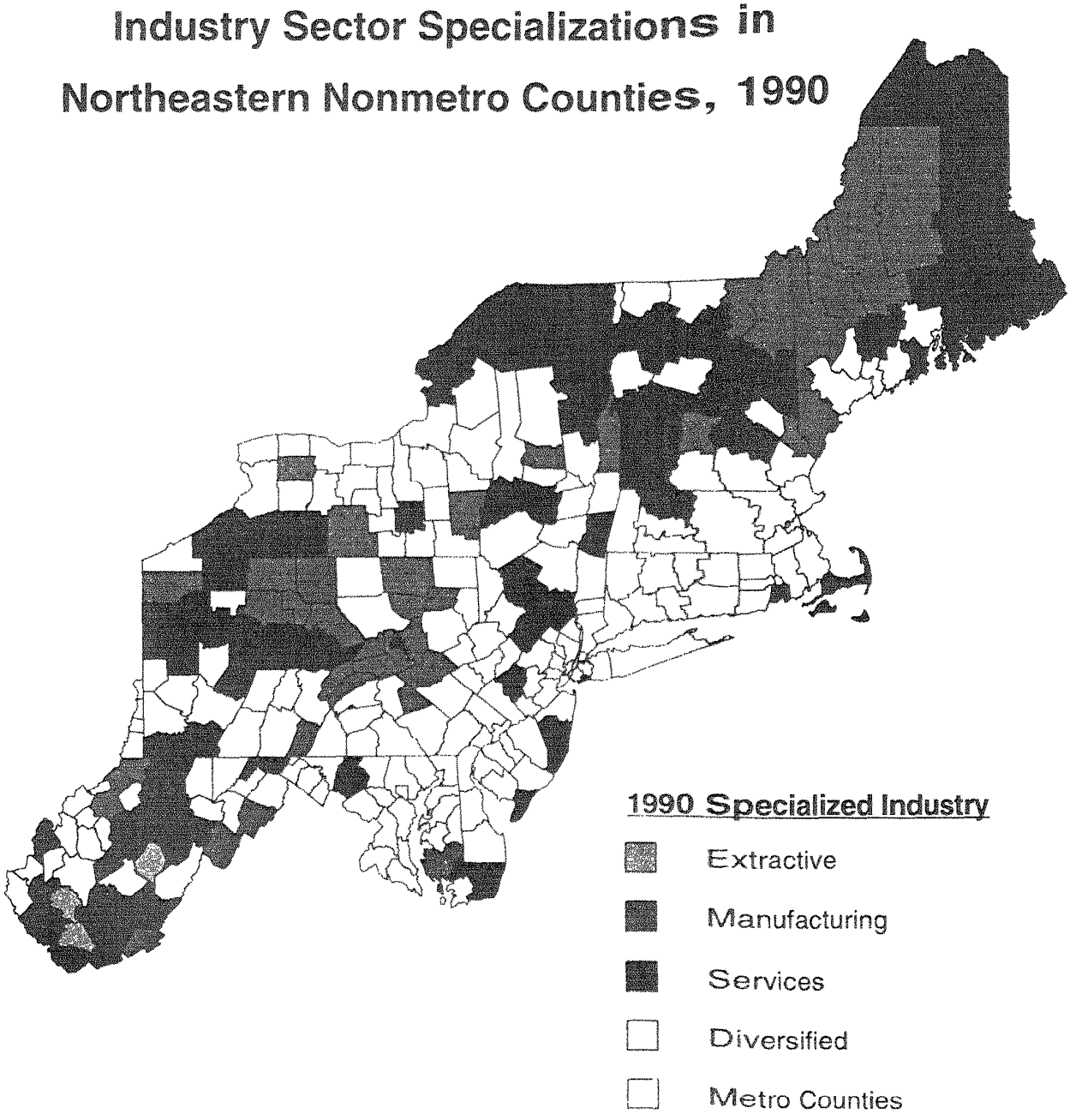
MAP 1.


Industry Sector Specializations in
Northeastern Nonmetro Counties, 1950
1950 Specialized Industry
Extractive
Manufacturing
Services
Diversified
Metro Counties

MAP 2.


Industry Sector Specializations in
Northeastern Nonmetro Counties, 1970
1970 Specialized Industry
Extractive
Manufacturing
Services
Diversified
Metro Counties

MAP 3.


Industry Sector Specializations in
Northeastern Nonmetro Counties, 1990
1990 Specialized Industry
Extractive
Manufacturing
Services
Diversified
Metro Counties

to another targeted set of key informants. These informants were individuals knowledgeable about the community, broadly representative of local interest groups, factions, and social status levels. The selection was accomplished through the use of a modified "snowball" procedure. First, four initial key informants were identified, one each from the following groupings: (1) A senior local government official; (2) a representative of the news media or of local business interests (e.g., Chamber of Commerce executive); (3) a local business leader; and (4) a leader of some grouping representing a minority, opposing, or "underclass" interest. These people were identified on the basis of directories, advice from people familiar with the community, and/or through conversations with local residents. Then, if the four interviews gave widely varying accounts of local actions, additional informants were selected from among persons mentioned by the initial informants and others. As previous studies have shown, key informants provide a useful point of entry for research on local actions, although the perspectives of a much broader grouping must be considered for detailed study of the action process and its outcomes.

The results of the key informant survey were then used in the analysis of the associations between activeness and the patterns of change and success identified under Objective 1, and to identify specific actions to be examined in more detail in the case studies. In each of the four selected sites, detailed investigations of local actions that occurred over the previous decade were conducted. Leading actors in each effort, identified by "snowball techniques" were interviewed to determine what happened, who participated, and what was accomplished. Documents and other materials were also reviewed on site. In addition, for each case study site, detailed data was collected from local sources on various aspects of community history including land use changes, economic history, development and maintenance of community organizations and symbols, and connections to the larger society. All of this data was then used to specify actor roles and agendas in local development projects, associational structures (groups and networks) in the actions, action strategies, and the outcomes that affected the well-being of the local populations.

Objective 3

All of the previously described material provided essential input for the tackling of the last objective - the household survey. By design, one common survey was to be used - with the major exception that measures of community activeness and involvement would vary by site. This framework allows for cross-site comparisons.

Our first step was to content analyze all of the key informant and action informant interviews, documents, and ethnographic materials developed in response to the second objective. Through a detailed synthesis of these materials, we were able to identify key actions that had occurred in each of the four sites across the six broad areas of transformation that we were studying. This distillation was used to develop a series of questions for use in the household survey.

In addition, each member of the research team developed different sections of questions of interest to them. These included batteries of items which assessed attitudes and behaviors, employment history, involvement in community affairs and activities, opinions about changes that had occurred in the community, sense of integration with community and neighbors, and core sociodemographics.

In total, 61 questions were asked in a 12-page survey. The survey was printed in a booklet form and mailed to a randomly selected sample of households in two sites (800 each) and to all households in the other two sites (312 and 903, respectively). We chose these numbers because of our experience with mail surveys and because we were aware of the recent trend toward declining response rates. Our goal was to achieve 400 usable responses from each site, so we chose 800 as the base for our calculations. Each survey was personalized, including a letter requesting the household's participation, signed by one of the principal investigators, and live postage was used - including on the preaddressed, return envelope. Following a multiple wave strategy, we received usable responses from 1,312 households, or a total 54% response rate (this adjusts for deceased, moved away, and undeliverables; also, 112 of the original 2,815 mailed were returned unanswered).

Discussion and Implications

This multi-method strategy took about 26 months to implement, involved the efforts of four faculty, three research associates, and six graduate students, and was not cheap. However, to our knowledge, this is the first study to develop a theoretical typology and to test its accuracy, as well as being one of the first to integrate qualitative methodologies with quantitative methodologies in the study of community economic transformation. To date, the project has produced numerous publications including four major research reports, nine journal articles, and formal presentations at a wide variety of professional meetings (regional economics, rural sociology, USDA, and various rural development conferences). In addition, one Ph.D. dissertation and one MS thesis have been completed, and two more MS theses and one Ph.D. dissertation are in progress. Further, the principal investigators of this project have been involved in the writing of several additional grants to further clarify the role of the locality in the economic transformation process and have been working with several communities and regional councils in their efforts at dealing with this restructuring using our findings as the base resource.

Echelberger, Herbert E., ed. 1996. **Rural America: a living tapestry.** Proceedings of "The Research Fit" module, 3rd annual U.S. Forest Service rural communities assistance conference; 1995 October 15-17; Knoxville, TN. Gen. Tech. Rep. NE-228. Radnor, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station. 30 p.

This proceedings contains five management and research methodology papers that address economic development of rural communities from three perspectives; provide a critique of research on the economic impacts of recreation enterprises on rural development; and discuss the importance of collaboration and a team approach to rural development research.