RURAL SUCCESSES
RURAL CHALLENGES

Presented at On the Bright Side,
Brandon Man.

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**CONTEXT**

- Rural youth often portrayed as disadvantaged
  - Fewer resources
  - Less social capital
  - Lower educational aspirations and attainments
  - Success = leaving
    - BUT this creates challenges for rural communities
Rural youth have close ties to home, family, community. Many rural youth opt to stay. Those who stay do not necessarily see themselves as failures.
Research literature often reinforces the idea that Rural = disadvantaged

- I want to challenge this view
- Explore the complexities of rural youth choices
- Identify the positive
- Recognise and document the challenges
SSHRC funded longitudinal survey in Nova Scotia (and Hamilton) 1989-2001

1989 - Interviews with 803 NS youth (50% rural); questionnaires for parents (Mothers N=601; Fathers N=456)

1992 - Short one page mailed survey to youth (N=711)

1994 - Longer mailed survey (N=586); interview to subset (N=381)

2000-2001 - Mailed survey (N=533 - 216 did short form); In depth unstructured interviews (N=28)

Qualitative responses as well as quantitative
FOCUS OF PRESENTATION

- Those who were rural in 1989
- Those who were rural in 2000-2001
- Relevant gender differences
- Successes
- Challenges
Rural to urban patterns, 1989, 1994, 2001

- R-R-R: 24%
- R-U-R: 5%
- R-R-U: 13%
- R-U-U: 19%
- U-R-R: 1%
- U-R-U: 2%
- U-U-R: 5%
- U-U-U: 42%
GENERAL PATTERNS, 1989 TO 2001

- Overall 29% were rural in both 1989 & 2001 (23% of males and 38% of females)
- 22% rural moved to urban (for both males and females)
- 6% moved from urban to rural (4% of males, 8% of females)
- 46% stayed or returned to urban (51% of males, 32% of females)
As of 2001 Urban youth more likely to:

- Have had a full-time job (98% vs. 90%)
- Currently have a full-time job (83% vs 62%)
- Started their own business (25% vs 12%)
“PROBLEMS” CONTINUED

Rural less likely to be very satisfied with their:

- Work or career (23% vs 32%)
- Educational attainments (28% vs 36%)
- Career opportunities (15% vs 24%)
- Educational opportunities (21% vs 40%)
Education as of 2001

- Hs or less
- Non U
- Univ

Comparison between rural (rur2001) and urban (Urb2001) areas.
URBAN HIGHER JOB STATUS

Job Status 2001

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JOBS...

Even with controls on job status and gender, Rural jobs are more likely to be reported as:
- Dangerous
- Boring
- Dirty
- Routine

Rural have lower incomes, but this reflects job status and education.

Urban jobs more directly related to their studies.
Almost a third (28%) of rural youth in 1989 say they’ll stay; that proportion DID stay.

Rural youth more likely to strongly agree “this is home” (51% vs. 36% urban in 1989); (51% rural vs 34% urban in 2001)

Plan to stay in same community as of 2001 (68% rural, 48% urban)
Rural youth more likely to:
- Be married (85% vs 75%) (and at a younger age)
- Had children (76% vs 41%) (and younger)
- Own their own house (60% vs 42%) (and younger)

Satisfaction:
Rural as satisfied as urban with their:
- Personal life
- Family life
- Where they live
SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Rural more likely to have a parent or grandparent living nearby (in the same county, community or household).
- Rural more likely to be in contact with these family members 1ce a day or more (mother 43% vs 22%; father 27% vs 17%; grandparent 8% vs 4%)
NO RURAL-URBAN DIFFERENCES

Reports of:
- Depression
- Being relaxed
- Feeling lonely
- In control
- Losing one’s temper
- Physical or mental health
- Last few years as difficult
RURAL MORE LIKELY TO REPORT THEIR 2001 RURAL COMMUNITY AS

- Good place to raise children
- Good place for the elderly
- Where neighbours care about you
- Where they are recognised by others
- Where they expect to stay
- “This place is like home”
- (Also more isolated)

Urban more diversity & government support
WHY PLAN TO STAY, RURAL 1989?

- Ties to family
- Likes living in the country
- “Homebody”
- “I’m happy here”
- “All my friends are here”
- Don’t like big cities
- Good place to raise kids
WHY PLAN TO LEAVE, RURAL 1989?

- JOBS!!!!
- Education
- Social and entertainment options of urban areas
- Desire to travel

Urban CAN stay because of options
WHAT LIKE MOST ABOUT RURAL 2001?

- Small
- Friendly
- Clean
- Quiet
- Safe
- Natural beauty
- Know people
- Near family
WHAT LIKE LEAST ABOUT RURAL 2001?

- Lack of facilities
- Isolated
- Not enough work
- Distance to various events
- Few young people
- Poor roads, especially in winter
WHAT LIKE MOST ABOUT URBAN 2001?

- Work opportunities
- Diverse
- Amenities
- Cultural events
- Strong economy
- Cosmopolitan
- Close to family and friends
WHAT LIKE LEAST ABOUT URBAN 2001?

- No family nearby
- Cost
- Traffic
- Noisy
- Crime
- Pollution
- Hard to meet people
- Distances to everything
Gender and educational level predict whether or not rural youth “stay” rural

- Females more rural
- Higher education less rural

Starting in rural obviously also affects 2001 location.
SO...?

- Exclusive focus on education and job status exaggerates rural disadvantage
- Rural are satisfied - need to recognise and build on this
- Rural challenges in terms of jobs and work options
- Rural supports in terms of kin.
"Rural" not inherently disadvantaged any more than "female"
Solution is not to move youth - i.e. make them urban
Provide opportunities for rural youth
Recognise their coping skills and ties to place
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