Rural Distress and Survival: The School and the Importance of "Community"

Bruce A. Miller
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

This report addresses community and educational issues of rural America as the United States enters the 1990s. Beginning with the collapse of the mining industry in a small, rural community in Idaho, it is shown that rural communities and their schools face great hardships resulting from numerous complex, interacting economic and social conditions. But rural people are resourceful. Many communities are beginning to employ creative solutions to solve their social and economic concerns. In small, rural communities, a closer look at how the school can serve community development needs is underway. However, the school appears to be a powerful, but under-utilized resource. Three general approaches for using the school as a catalyst for community development are described: School As Community Center, Community As Curriculum, and School-Based Economic Development. Several programs, notably Foxfire, REAL, and the work of the McREL's Rural Institute, have demonstrated the benefits to be gained when the school directly serves the needs of the community.

Introduction

On *Black Monday*, August 25, 1981, Gulf Resources and Chemical Corporation announced the closure of the Bunker Hill mining operation, immediately furloughing more than 2,100 workers. Comments by Vernon Lannen, an Idaho State Senator and Bunker Hill employee, reflect the shock felt throughout the Silver Valley of northern Idaho: "I'll never forget where I was when I heard. It was like when Kennedy was shot." (Fisher, 1981, pp. 1-2). The impact on the community was immediate:

More than 33% of Silver Valley residents were unemployed. Mine failures, followed by the closure of support service businesses such as grocery stores, banks, insurance agencies, restaurants, and gas stations, created a climate of stress and anxiety for the entire valley.

The out-migration of young professionals and mine management offices further exacerbated the economic downturn and highlighted dependence on a single, resource-based industry primarily controlled and dominated by economic interests outside the community.

Social workers began intensive social support efforts in the schools and communities of the Silver Valley to provide counseling and assistance to families faced with the distress of unemployment, monthly food and utility bills, house and car payments, and the disintegration of families.

Elected town and county officials, school board members, business leaders and various service organizations met to consider cooperative and consolidation strategies to offset the plunging economic base that placed health, public safety, educational, and related social services in jeopardy.

A bus load of Silver Valley residents travelled 700 miles to visit the revitalized rural community of Leavenworth, Washington. They wanted to see how a rural mining community, located in the Cascade Mountain Range, transformed itself from a dying village into an economically viable community supported by a thriving tourism industry.

Other Silver Valley residents visited Anaconda, Montana, to gain first-hand information and insight regarding the impact

---

Bruce A. Miller is Rural Education Specialist in the Rural Education Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204.

that a major industry shutdown had on other small, rural communities.

These events occurred between 1980 and 1983, and were followed by community and economic development efforts that continue to this day. From 1980 to 1990, the face of the Silver Valley, especially the small town of Wallace, has been altered radically by mine closures and termination of mineral processing, a 60% drop in the tax base and an overall decline in population and associated impacts on the community.

Although these alterations in the Wallace community clearly placed great stress on families and students, it also changed a way of life that for more than 100 years had been dependent on mining. Before the crash, students could drop out of school and make more money than school teachers. Awareness of the extent of community dependency emerged as mines closed and workers faced long unemployment lines and retraining. More than 40% of those working in the mining industry had no high school degree or its equivalent.

However, many positive outcomes resulted from these mine closures. A renewed sense of community, driven by a powerful instinct for survival, brought people together. Mine closures meant the loss of the local economic base and brought about a significant reassessment of personal and community identity. Valley-wide planning and development meetings, brainstorming sessions, data collection and information gathering, neighbors helping neighbors, and schools opening their doors in support of families and adult learning were common occurrences. By the late 1980s, noticeable changes had begun to emerge in the Silver Valley as a result of community efforts to overcome the social and economic downturn created by the collapse of the mining industry in the area. Efforts at economic diversification into tourism and small business enterprise showed promising results. Wallace underwent downtown beautification and a historic landmark designation. There were signs of increased community solidarity, an improved quality of environment and life, and the emergence of new local community leaders. Most importantly, the community became painfully aware of their vulnerability to a resource-dependent economy.

Although mine failures appeared to have abated in the mid-1980s, national and international economic trends continue to have a negative impact on the Silver Valley. Mines once considered bulwarks have begun closing, the tax base

slides even lower, and unemployment and out-migration have begun anew. The hospital in Wallace will close its doors for the first time and the school district has cut programs and services in order to pass its levy the second time around.

However, the events in the Silver Valley represent a rapid economic decline in a single industry (i.e., mining). Many other rural communities have declined gradually, through several interacting economic and social factors occuring over time. Such decline is slow paced and therefore insidious because it may go unnoticed for too long, like a gradual slope rather than an abyss.

A recently completed study of declining school enrollment in seven rural schools and communities in the United States illustrates the complex and diverse nature of rural decline (U.S. Department of Education, in press). Table 1 presents selected characteristics of the seven case study sites. If the rates of decline are compared, it appears that the 34% decline in enrollment in the mining community of Stafford is the most severe, with the lowest decline occurring in Cottonview at roughly 13%. However, data from the study indicates that the decline in the Cottonview community from 1950 to 1990 was 50%; between 1960 and 1990 there was a 38% decline. This illustrates the cumulative effect of enrollment decline, which may not appear significant if viewed within a narrow time frame. As Table 1 demonstrates, there are many causes for decline that are neither directly related to economics nor occur in a short time frame: out-migration, declining birth rate, and aging, to name three. Such factors may be gradual, but they aggregate to a significant level when viewed over time.

Taken as a whole, this study presents a dispiriting picture of a distressed rural America: one faced with declining populations and diminishing resources, a low level of economic and social support, and a history of dependency on centralized, urban, and multinational corporate resource industries. On the other hand, the case studies show that some rural communities fight against overwhelming economic and social odds to keep their schools and communities viable. But, whether the rate of social and economic decline in rural America is chronic or acute, it is evident that a large number of small, rural schools and communities face an uncertain future.

In the research of this article, I present a review and synthesis of economic and social issues facing rural America in the 1990s along with potentially successful approaches that distressed

Table 1
Selected Characteristics of Case Studies on Declining Enrollment

	Evergreen	Mountvale	Cottonview	Grant	Timberton	Stafford	Hallton
Focus	State/school district	School district	School district	School district	State/school district	School district	State
Economic base	Agriculture and timber	Mining and tourism	Agriculture	Agriculture	Timber	Mining	Agriculture
Rate of decline	16.2%	15.9%	12.9%	24.3%	17.9%	34.0%	N/A
Factors in decline	Economic decline, resource depletion, birth rate decline, out-migration, aging population	Economic decline, changes in technology, natural disaster, out-migration, birth rate decline, aging population	Minimum wage, improved farming technology, increased farm size and efficiency, out-migration trends	Improved farming technology, increased farm size and efficiency, out-migration, birth rate decline	Economic decline, changing market trends, out-migration, catastrophic fire	Economic and environmental trends leading to mine closures, out-migration	Improved farming technology, population shift, birth rate decline, changing market

Note. Adapted from U.S. Department of Education (in press).

communities and schools have used for their mutual survival and well-being.

Distress in Rural America[1]

The years 1917 and 1940 are landmarks in America's population distribution. In 1917, the urban population surpassed the rural population for the first time in the country's history. In 1940, as the United States geared up to face a world threat, the rural population took another significant decline that continues unabated throughout the 1980s. Associated with this increasing population disparity has come increased unemployment, poverty, and feelings of helplessness among rural people. The problems facing rural America clearly are not new. They are complex and interrelated with issues of geographic location, low population density, and historically dependent relationships on core urban centers for economic opportunities. Moreover, rural conditions appear to be worsening as the United States moves from an industrialized to an information-based economy, and from a national to a global market place (Hobbs, 1988; Reid, 1988; U.S. Congress, 1989; National Governor's Association, 1988).

Figure 1 illustrates the occupational changes taking place as the labor market has shifted from predominantly agrarian and industrial production work to a society dominated by service occupations such as clerical and sales workers, technicians, managers, and professional workers of all types. Nearly all forms of physical production are declining at such a rate that, by 2010, they will represent a minority of the U.S. workforce. If current trends continue, this sector of the workforce will be nearly non-existent by 2080 (Swyt, 1987).

Rural community viability becomes threatened as the rural population decreases with the out-migration of the young and often better-educated workforce. The vast majority of these rural migrants resettle in metropolitan areas, enlarging the population and straining the existing infrastructure. This population shift creates a situation of double jeopardy. Metropolitan areas, swollen to capacity, choke on the rapid growth; rural communities lose their citizens and suffer from economic and social malnutrition.

Table 2, based on Congressional testimony given to the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families (U.S. Congress, 1989), summarizes

[1]Defining rural is fraught with many complexities that reflect the diverse and complex nature of rural America. This author uses the term rural to mean any place where residents live in an unincorporated area or a town of less than 2500 people and is over 30 miles from an urban center. For a detailed discussion of this definitional issue, see *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 8*(3).
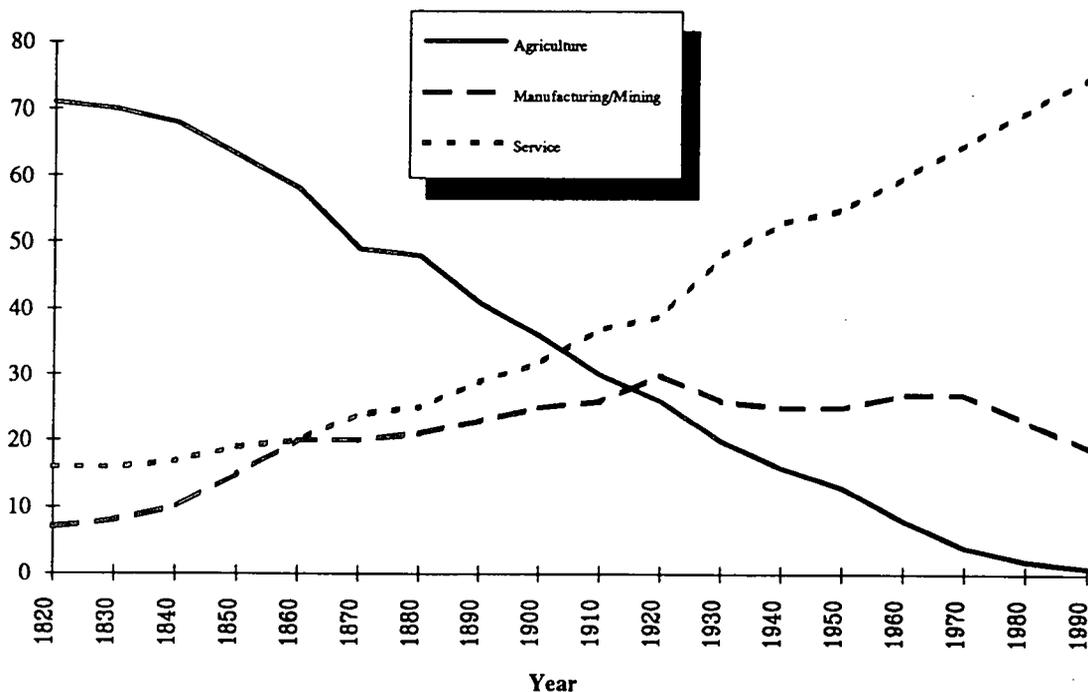
Figure 1. A comparison of three U.S. workforce production sectors (adapted from Swyt, 1987).

data on social and economic indicators of community distress (State Education Department/SUNY, 1987). These data help illuminate economic factors relating to rural out-migration such as minimal local job opportunities, low wages, and limited social support. Most alarming about these data is the downward spiral toward increased poverty, reduced long-term health and social benefits, and decreased earnings.

Although rural poverty rates tend to be greater than metropolitan rates, there are some relative strengths of rural residents. For example, rural poor are more likely to own their own home, pay less to raise their children, and have a slightly lower annual cost of living. However, these advantages appear to be offset by lower wages, fewer benefits, and a greater tax liability. In other words, owning your own home may be short-lived if wages decline in relation to inflation and other economic contingencies (constructed from U.S. Congress, 1989).

Education represents another indicator of rural distress. Educational attainment for rural residents falls below the metropolitan population. In addition, dropout rates tend to be higher for rural than metropolitan areas (Swanson & Butler, 1988). Since higher paying jobs relate to higher educa-

tional attainment, rural residents seeking employment in metropolitan areas are at a clear disadvantage. Similarly, higher paying industry is less likely to locate in an area unable to provide a skilled workforce.

On the basis of the foregoing information, we can define a distressed community as one in which economic, social, and educational indicators reveal a decline and deterioration of the social and physical infrastructure that facilitate community renewal and sustainability—thus leading to a loss of the psychological sense of community.

As we will see later, the psychological sense of community may be the pivotal axis upon which successful community development turns. Interestingly, most efforts at community development have failed to focus on this. Often, economic development is equated with community development, leading to an emphasis on economics at the exclusion of the social dimension of community. Mounting evidence suggests that, without building this sense of community, development efforts are likely to fail (Sandmann, 1988).

Taken together, what does this demographic information reveal about the level of distress and needs facing rural residents?

Table 2

Comparison of Selected Rural and Urban Social and Economic Indicators of Distress

	Rural	Metropolitan
Social Indicators		
Rate of poverty increase among young adults and children	increasing at twice the rate of metropolitan	increasing at half the rate of rural
Children in poverty	25%	20%
Workers		
Covered by employee sponsored pension	44%	50%
Poor who qualify for Medicaid	25%	43%
Economic Indicators		
Decrease in median family income (1979-1986)	10%	1%
1987 median family income	$24,397	$33,131

Note. Adapted from U.S. Congress (1989).

Distress and Impact:
Implications for Rural Communities and Schools

Given that a majority of rural communities are manufacturing or resource dependent, the future of rural America looks bleak without an infusion of creative ideas, resources, and an intense commitment to rural revitalization at the federal, state, and local levels. However, lasting change must grow from a better understanding of the social and economic factors contributing to rural decline.

Toward an Understanding of Rural Decline

Economists characterize the center of commerce and social activity as the "core," a term generally synonymous with urban or metropolitan areas. As you move out from the core, you move into the "periphery," which may be characterized as adjacent and non-adjacent rural areas. For example, if we found Seattle on a map of Washington and then identified the communities radiating out from this core urban area, we would

be describing peripheral communities. This core-periphery concept provides a simple, yet powerful, framework for understanding rural economic decline. A dependent relationship exists between the core and the periphery that historically has produced much greater benefits for the core.

Core areas, being politically powerful centers, dominate the economy by controlling the flow of raw materials and resources. Moreover, the concept of core is relative: An urban core such as Seattle has core and periphery relationships with the larger core, Los Angeles. This same concept stretches into rural resource-based communities, where

[A]t the center of resource-based communities are the mill managers from corporate headquarters, local community leaders appointed to decision-making boards and commissions located in urban cores, and activists seeking local support. At the periphery of the resource-based community are the laborers and longtime resi-

dents who remain in the community. (Smith, 1991, p. 3)

The impact of rural dependence clearly can be seen in the demise of rural mining communities. One such community is located in the mountains of the Northwest (Miller, 1990). From 1975 to 1990, the community went from having the wealthiest tax base in the state to the poorest. When silver prices boomed, students quit high school and worked in the mines making more money than their teachers. The community provided cheap and cost-effective labor. The community was supported by one industry. The mines were owned and controlled by multinational corporations located in urban core areas such as New York City, with branch offices in the rural communities. Managers and professionals employed in the mining industry lived in the local communities but owed their allegiance to the core center. A similar example can be seen in the reorganization of Safeway Stores in the early 1980s, which led to the closure of many stores in rural areas and left some communities without a local grocery store.

As international prices fluctuated and environmental legislation increased the cost of mining, corporations pulled up stakes and moved overseas where cheaper forms of labor and less environmental restrictions could be found. With this move came plummeting land values and an increased tax burden for local residents. Mining managers and professionals simply moved with their companies, leaving their homes. Ironically, the companies purchased the homes and unloaded them on the local market, significantly driving down property values. The irony is that locals often bought these homes with the mistaken notion of making an economic coup, only to realize much later the coup was on them.

Some of the companies were unscrupulous. One company, for example, highgraded the mines (taking out only the best ore, with no reinvestment in the mine) and defaulted on pensions and health benefits. The community was left with unemployment rates as high as 35%, a largely uneducated workforce, a failing tax base, a damaged environment, and a community in great stress. On the positive side, the crisis in the mining industry heightened awareness of a sense of community and solidarity among residents. Through such a crisis, people learn about themselves, their community, and what they really value. In the words of a long-term resident:

I have learned through the total changes that people's spirit and willingness to participate and work hard has been really enlightening. The community survives because people have such a strong desire to live here and do something about it. (Miller, 1991, unpublished raw data)

Mining provides only one example taken from a single resource industry. Similar patterns in other resource industries, although not as severe as mining, continue to show decline (Reid, 1988). For example, farm-dependent counties that gained jobs in the early 1980s, lost jobs during the mid-1980s because of improved technology and farm closures. From 1983-86, manufacturing-dependent counties lost population because of slow job growth. Although production has increased because of automation, wood product-related industries have seen a decline in employment, especially in the Northwest (Sommers, Whitelaw, Niemi, & Harrison, 1988).

Smith (1991), an anthropologist studying resource-dependent rural economies, summarizes the problems of peripheral, resource-dependent communities:

More and more, resources from rural communities are required to sustain an increasingly urban world. Population and power concentrate in urban cores. The resource-based communities supporting this urbanization struggle to survive. The people of these communities see themselves as less able to control their destinies. Community leaders express frustration and powerlessness. They see themselves as being controlled by powers far away who neither understand nor really care about the needs of people in resource-based communities. (p. 1)

The Changing Landscape of Rural America

Many of the forces bringing change to urban America also are bringing significant change to the diverse rural countryside. These changes are driven by the rapid growth of technology, the increased urbanization of rural areas, the globalization of the economy, and other forces. Although these changes affect every sector of society, they appear to have a greater impact on rural communities.

Technological change has been a way of life in rural America. The mechanical/chemical revolu-

tion of farming since the 1950s is now being supplanted by a biotechnology and information technology revolution that could be even more dramatic in its effects on rural areas. The emergence of information technologies offers the opportunity to reduce further the isolation of rural areas and open the door to new rural economic activities that previously have been tied to concentrations of people. New technologies also have the potential to allow some activities now requiring urban locations to move to rural areas and vice versa (U.S. Congress, 1991).

Further, rural America no longer is isolated from international, social, and economic forces. The movement of rural manufacturing to other countries, the fluctuating value of the dollar, increased competition from foreign manufacturers and agricultural markets, and the impact of international trade negotiations and policies illustrate this exposure to international forces.

Changing demographics, especially an aging rural population, is another influence which has implications for policy concerns relating to health care, housing, transportation, recreational facilities, training for emerging occupations, and the retiree as an economic force. Moreover, an increased proportion of personal income is coming from dividends, interests, rents, private retirement funds, and transfers (e.g., social security, public assistance, unemployment compensation).

The face of farming also has changed. Off-farm income is a larger and more stable source of income for farm families than net farm income. Similarly, there has been a national shift away from manufacturing and agriculture to service-producing activities such as health care, finance, insurance, engineering, and information processing thus creating a need for change in the workforce (Faas, Barron, Smith, Afoaku, & Irwin, 1991, p. 9).

Identifying the Problem:
Size, Isolation, and Loss of Community

With a decline in employment opportunities and the subsequent reduction in population, rural communities have become dependent on a broader range of services outside their communities. As population declines, rural communities lose the critical mass needed to support such services as hospitals, banking, education, and many local businesses. Needed services often reestablish themselves, but only on a regional basis.

The traditionally small, rural community, which often has been characterized as demon-strating a high level of integration and self-sufficiency (Kohlenberg & Kohlenberg, 1991), finds itself in a state of *dis-integration* as local residents go outside their communities for services (Hobbs, 1988; Bryant & Grady, 1990). The degree of dis-integration may be related to the proximity to metropolitan areas. From one perspective, small, rural villages close to an urban center simply may find themselves reintegrated, but on the scale of a bedroom or suburban community. Ironically, the center of the once rural community shifts to the core; the rural village has now become urbanized.

Going outside the community loosens the bonds that traditionally tie people together. With dis-integration comes the loss of a sense of community. This may not be a problem or concern for rural communities adjacent to metropolitan areas, where proximity to the core guarantees access to vital resources. However, to non-adjacent rural communities it can lead to a fragmentation of effort where people are unable to develop the unified action necessary for successful community renewal (Sundet & Mermelstein, 1988).

Defining "Community"

To better grasp the concept of dis-integration and its implications for the survival of small, rural communities, we need to understand "community" and its relationship to school. Historically, schools have served two general purposes. First, schools have sought to socialize the students into the norms and values of the family and community. Schools serve to transmit the values of one generation to the next. But schools also serve another role: to liberate the child from the limitations of the parent, to open up new horizons of a bigger and better world. In this sense, education can serve to free children from poverty, racism, and other social constraints. As Coleman (1987) points out, these two purposes are not mutually exclusive or necessarily in conflict. However, for them to be compatible requires a high level of homogeneity within the community and, further, between the community and school. A contemporary example is the Amish, where community and school provide an apparently seamless continuum of values and norms. When the purposes fail to align, as is often the case in pluralistic societies, conflict may arise.

Coleman defines a functional community as one in which children's friends at school have parents who are also friends linked to the family. In other words, there is a consistent social struc-

ture or an "extended network of kinship, friendship, and work relations that pervade . . . the community" (p. 182). Coleman uses the term "intergenerational closure" (p. 186) to describe this network. In a small, rural community, where generations of families have grown up in close proximity, we could expect to find intergenerational closure (or structural consistency). For example, when a child has a problem or conflict in school or the community, someone in the social network will communicate to the parents and provide support. In a metropolitan area, where friends and relatives may be spread out over a large geographical area (or not even live in the same city), the parents often are the last to know when their child needs help. And even then, the source usually is not a friend or relative, but, rather, from a school official or government agency.

Intergenerational closure has both benefits and constraints. On the positive side,

> [t]he parent has additional channels through friends and acquaintances of the child, those children's parents, and back to the parent. The parent has a set of sentinels, each imperfect, but taken together, capable of providing a rich texture of information about the child's behavior. (Coleman, 1987, p. 188)

In the absence of closure, children may exploit the situation by working the system to keep information away from parents, thus loosening the bonds of parental rules and guidance. In functional communities, one finds intergenerational friendships where a parent's friend may introduce his son and the son of his friend to fishing, "or a grandfather will help his grandson raise a calf for 4-H" (Coleman, 1987, p. 189). In the absence of intergenerational closure, adults tend to be hesitant about encouraging relationships between children and adults because of apprehensions regarding child exploitation or abuse.

There also are costs to intergenerational closure usually associated with exclusivity and a separatist attitude that can isolate the children from the outside world. Children growing up in a close-knit community may be ill-equipped to enter the larger society or suffer culture shock upon entry. Some children may never leave their protected environment. Coleman (1987) summarizes the advantages and disadvantages to living in a close-knit community:

> [T]he child loses one kind of opportunity—the opportunity for success in the larger world—by remaining embedded within the narrow constraints of the community and gains another kind—the opportunity to have the warmth, respect, and satisfaction of a member of the community as an adult. (p. 192)

Moreover, there are advantages for parents living in functional communities in terms of the resources available for raising children and monitoring the school. This especially is important for parents with "little education, few organizational skills, little self-confidence, and little money" (Coleman, 1987, p. 194). For these parents, the support developed around a network of friends and relatives can provide the kind of consistency necessary for developing norms for governing children's behavior. Intergenerational closure serves as a resource for parents raising children. Recent programmatic examples where functional communities have been developed around the school in inner-city environments can be found in the work of James Comer (Comer & Haynes, 1991). He has been successful at developing a form of intergenerational closure among parents, school personnel, and community members that has proven valuable to parents, especially single parents.

A functional community also has relatively consistent values developed over time by people interacting on a daily face-to-face basis, where mutual understandings and shared values become the cultural foundation for the community. However, consistency of values can exist without having a functional community. For example, in a metropolitan area, parents with children in an alternative school may share similar values regarding education, but may not know one another because they live in different parts of the city. No intergenerational closure exists. In other words, values consistency is not a sufficient condition for producing a functional community.

Communities with intergenerational closure and values consistency may be characterized as highly integrated. In other words, the various constituents exist in relative harmony. In small, rural communities, this integration can be seen in the intergenerational support provided for children and adults. In a recent study of social service delivery in small, isolated rural communities, Kohlenberg and Kohlenberg (1991) noted:

[C]aretaking and caregiving are indeed obvious and striking features of small town life. Often we were impressed, sometimes we were awestruck, at the almost casual acceptance of the idea that it is *necessary* to care for one's neighbors, friends, and family members. Such attitudes are not foreign in cities, but they are not reinforced by the circumstances of urban life. (p. 22)

Two Forces Devitalizing Community. Two forces have disrupted some close-knit communities. First, when young, educated residents work and socialize in nearby metropolitan areas, they no longer identify with the local community, its values, or its people. As a result, relations weaken and discontinuity develops between generations.

A second source of disengagement arises from the rapid growth of communications technology. In the past, communications were directed primarily inward toward community members. However, communication technologies such as radio, television, and videos have shifted communication outward. According to Coleman (1987), "these new sources of communication, unconstrained by the norms that once dominated the community, now offer values that deviate sharply from those and provide a base of legitimation for the deviant values" (p. 199). Where rural parents once could insulate their children from the harsh realities of the outside world, media have brought those realities into the living room.

Functional rural communities are an endangered species. They straddle two worlds: On the one hand, they strive to maintain a world characterized by small-town values where residents look out for one another and kinship and friendship run deep. On the other hand, they face the continual encroachment of urban America and the need to somehow adjust to impending change. Monk and Haller (1986), having conducted detailed case studies of small towns and their schools, describe the dilemma facing rural communities:

In some respects the image Americans have of their small towns—shaded, tree-lined streets; a solid sense of community identity; friendly, caring neighbors; a reasonably stable economic base oriented to the surrounding farms; and a shared set . . . of values—describes the villages we visited. . . . In every locality, the economy presented problems. The root of these problems was perceived to be the gradual drain of business and industry out of the community . . . whatever the cause, it was clear that each village was in some economic difficulty.

This difficulty manifested itself in numerous ways. Perhaps the most obvious was a generally high rate of unemployment. . . . The state of the local economies also had less obvious consequences . . . a drain of youth out of these villages to areas that offer greater economic opportunity . . . the lack of leisure activities for youth . . . people drive, sometimes lengthy distances, to work in neighboring small cities. (pp. 25-28)

Probably the most significant theme to emerge from these researchers' case studies was the central role the school played in the community. The school remained one of the only viable institutions in these economically declining communities. It served as a gathering place, a key recreational facility, and an employer. Perhaps most importantly, it fostered "a stable pattern in the web of social life that binds individuals together. It is what makes a community something more than an aggregation of people" (Monk & Haller, 1986; p. 28). Interestingly, Monk and Haller did not find the school acting in a central role in community survival. The role of the school in these communities existed more by default than by intention.

If rural communities are to survive, they will need to appear as valued places to live—a difficult task, indeed, when there are few means to earn a living. To explore the tension between quality of place and earning a living, Donaldson (1986) studied 46 young adults in Sawyer. He documented the attempts of these young rural people to "reconcile attachments to community and past with a desire—or economic need—to be a part of the modern American mainstream" (p. 122). In doing so, Donaldson provided a framework for viewing how rural communities might approach issues of decline and survival.

Donaldson (1986) found three patterns of development in these 46 individuals: *traditional, modern-achieving,* and *questioning.* The *questioning* and *traditional* youth value their psychological sense of community. They understand the benefits to be gained by living in a community of intergenerational support. However, the *tradi-*

tional youth place themselves and their communities in a vulnerable position. By failing to actively recognize and understand their connections to the larger world, "traditional" youth remain especially dependent and vulnerable to forces outside the community that can negatively alter what they value most about rural, community life. The *questioning* youth had lived in both the modern metropolitan world and the traditional small-town, rural communities. They found advantages and limitations to each. In order to live in their tradition-bound small, rural hometowns, they sought integration of the best of both worlds. *Questioning* youth developed experience that allowed them to make informed choices. Unlike the *modern achieving* group, the *questioning* youth did not reject their roots. Moreover, they did not accept a static, unchanging view of their community as did the traditional group.

The *questioning* group represents an understanding that the very traditions which have helped to isolate and protect what is unique in the community may also be its undoing. Ironically, the *modern achieving* group represents the greatest threat. They present a view dominated by economic and financial concerns. It may be that the best chance for the survival of small, rural communities lies in a greater percentage of rural youth shifting into the *questioning* group. This would require a changing focus for rural schools and the assumption of greater responsibility in community affairs.

Toward a Balanced Perspective

Wilkinson (1974), a sociologist with extensive background in rural community development, describes three dimensions of social well-being in communities: economic-technical growth, human interpersonal growth, and environmental quality protection. Too often, Wilkinson points out, efforts at community development focus almost exclusively on the economic dimension. For example, bringing in an industry that creates new jobs but places strains on the other two dimensions, in the long run, may be a liability to the community. Clearly, without employment and the means to feed and clothe one's family, there can be little chance for a community to survive. But this need for economic development requires a balance with the other two dimensions.

With increasing urbanization, rural America faces a formidable challenge in sustaining a viable sense of community. In meeting this challenge, residents of small, rural communities must look beyond traditional solutions that had been viewed as successful in prior years. In resource-based economies such as forestry, mining, fishing, and agriculture, rural residents cannot expect the high levels of employment enjoyed in the past (Harrison & Seib, 1990). The manufacturing sector, which has proven to be a vital source of economic renewal in the 1970s and 80s, no longer holds much promise. Rural communities must look to themselves for the key to their survival (Hobbs, 1988). This means taking a hard, cold look at the economic, social, and environmental realities facing their communities; establishing a collective vision for their future; and seeking to develop that future in ways which give them greater community control.

Survival: The School and the Importance of "Community"

Schools can play a significant role in revitalizing small, rural communities; they often remain one of the last infrastructures linking the community and the outside world (Hobbs, 1988; Reid, 1988). Many other institutions and businesses have become regionalized. In addition, residents often go outside the community for needed services, further weakening community self-sufficiency. By default, the school stands at center stage, providing the community with a sense of identity, a source of employment, and a common meeting place. However, these services create a major tax responsibility for the community. As one of the most stable institutions in rural communities, what aspects of school operations can be used for community renewal?

Rural Schools and Communities are Inextricably Linked

Newtown's historical records contain a hand-drawn map dating from the 1930s that provides a glimpse of a grander era, an era when downtown offered markets, restaurants, doctors' offices, a hotel— even a movie "house." Although the main street is almost empty now, the school remains; it has come to represent Newtown itself. (Koepke, 1991, p. 42)

Whether rural school personnel like it or not, schools have come to symbolize the identity and survival of many small, rural communities

(McCracken, 1988; Peshkin, 1978). The ramifications of this central role have come under considerable attention in recent years as rural communities find themselves distressed by economic and social changes occurring at the state, national, and international levels of government (Hobbs, 1988; Rosenfeld, 1985). Although significant gains in understanding, model development, and implementation have been made in linking schools to their communities, school personnel and local community residents generally fail to recognize school-community interdependency and the synergistic benefits of collaboration. Two examples illustrate this problem.

First, many small, rural districts have difficulty passing levies beyond minimal operating budgets, which limits educational program growth and development. Second, teachers may garner the highest salaries in town and still seek to negotiate benefits and salary increases in a community characterized by high unemployment and an out-migration of educated youth (Monk & Haller, 1986). Both examples portray a serious dilemma for teachers and rural communities. On the one hand, rural communities need schools to prepare youth for future work and schooling opportunities. On the other hand, without offering competitive salaries, the quality of programs may be diminished. Further, additional resources are needed for school reform to better meet the needs of rural youth who will be competing for jobs in an information-based economy. These issues point to the necessity that rural schools and communities recognize how they are linked in vital ways and learn to collaborate for their mutual survival.

How Schools Benefit Their Communities. Rural schools support their local communities in numerous ways. Some are obvious; others are subtle and often overlooked. The most visible contributions are educational—providing community residents with a basic education—and social—serving as a center of entertainment and a gathering place for such activities as sports, plays, and recreational facilities. Teachers often play leadership roles in cultural and recreational activities. Schools also have been noted to serve as safe havens during times of community environmental and social stress (Miller, 1990). Economically, the school is often the largest employer in the community. But there are secondary economic benefits that tend to offset the costs associated with operating the school (Sederberg, 1987). These benefits often go unrecognized.

How Rural Communities Benefit Their Schools. Without a community and its children, schools would not exist—an obvious observation sometimes blurred by concerns over the professional role and organization of teaching. Besides the client relationship, the small rural community also provides many other benefits such as providing a tax base as a source of school revenue, serving as advisors on committees, and providing parent volunteers across a range of activities from curriculum resources and coaching to chaperoning school events.

Because of isolation, limited resources, and low population density, community residents do more for their schools than might be expected in a metropolitan setting. Moreover, such activities often carry the weight of tradition and therefore may go unrecognized as anything special. For example, parents often coach without pay in order that an athletic activity, such as basketball, be offered. Rural schools often have multigrade classrooms that use parents for instructional activities on a voluntary basis (Miller, 1988). This is especially true in communities where local traditions and language have been incorporated into the school's program. In many isolated communities, it is common for parents to raise funds, provide transportation, and chaperone major trips. However, the level of community involvement varies widely from one rural school district to another, depending on such elements as leadership, community solidarity, school culture, and climate.

Business as Usual: Barriers to School-Community Linkages

Schools as institutions are slow to change. So are small, rural communities. Ways of working and relating become routine. Over time, routines become traditions and go unnoticed. Often, it takes an economic social or environmental crisis to trigger change. Earlier, I described such an event occurring in the mining community of Wallace. In this small, rural community in the mountains of northern Idaho, mine closures called into question traditions that had been in place for more than 100 years. Economic and social survival required immediate action.

In a similar manner, the farm crisis of the 1980s forced farmers to make major changes in farming practices. Often, they had to sell farms and abandon deep-rooted connections with the land. The causes of these changes reflect a clear

sign of more insidious events to come for rural communities, especially those characterized by isolation and low population density. Significant community development efforts at the local level are necessary for survival. Even then, many small, rural schools will close and their communities will die. Some sociologists view this passing as a normal evolutionary event (Stoneall, 1983). However, for rural residents, and the country as a whole, such passing sounds the death knell of a valuable way of life.

Clearly, one major barrier limiting school-community collaboration is the failure to recognize that a serious problem exists. This is especially true for those rural communities where economic decline has been more gradual. Interestingly, even when community residents and school personnel acknowledge the problem, they have difficulty envisioning how to approach the problem, especially in terms of how the school can be an asset (Emery, 1991). In a similar manner, school personnel appear not to see a role for the school in rural revitalization (Reid, 1988).

A second barrier reflects a reluctance of educators to promote the rural school as a resource for community development efforts. Several forces play a part in this barrier. Hobbs (1987) suggests that teacher training does not prepare teachers with the conceptual understanding to link the classroom or the school with the community. In part, this is related to the second factor—centralized state controls designed for large metropolitan areas (Nachtigal & Haas, 1991). This includes such controls as accreditation, certification, and graduation requirements. Although these controls serve an important function in helping to maintain educational quality, they tend to be biased in favor of larger metropolitan schools. Both teacher training and centralized state controls grow from the dominance of core urban centers.

A third, and perhaps the most significant, barrier relates to the role of the school as an institution providing a social service and the professional role of teaching. Schools are institutions designed to deliver a social service (education) to the community, but they often confuse their role of serving the needs of students with the need for self-preservation. As Hodgkinson (1989) points out, social institutions, over time, begin to focus their attention away from the client: "The essential focus shifts inward, rewarding those activities which maintain the bureaucracies' inner health, regardless of whether or not it is doing what it is supposed to do" (p. 7).

Hodgkinsons' observation also applies to problems associated with the professional role of teaching. For example, Hulsebosch (1991) examined the relationship between teachers' self-definition of professionalism and how teachers involved parents in school activities. Hulsebosch found that those teachers most involved with parents "equate professionalism with the ability to maintain dialogue between the in- and out-of-school lives of both their students and themselves. For contrast, low involvement teachers [believe] professionalism means separating and protecting their work with students from thoughts, experiences, and people beyond the classroom walls"(p. 183).

Miller and Hull (1991) encountered a similar phenomenon while conducting a group interview with rural school parent volunteers. One parent said she had been told by the principal "that teachers are the professionals and know what is best for students" (unpublished raw data). A second parent said she felt that teachers often forgot that students do not belong to the school, but are someone's son or daughter. From a legal perspective, the school possesses a contractual relationship with the community to provide education. Thus, school personnel may feel possessive in matters considered educational. As these parents point out, however, there is a whole child living a large portion of life outside school with parents or guardians. This raises the question: Are there benefits to be gained by integrating outside-of-school elements into the curriculum of the school?

Bell and Sigsworth (1987), in their work with rural schools in Great Britain, believe the answer to this question is an undeniable "yes!" Professional educators possess important understandings of the child, but it is only partial. The other piece required for filling in the whole child resides in the parents and the community where children play out their lives.

There are other barriers, such as limited time and resources, which constrain teachers from seeking increased school-community involvement. Meaningful change must come from an understanding of community-school needs and the constraints that must be overcome if solutions are to be successful. To this end, school personnel and community residents need to reconceptualize the primary purpose of the school and its role within the web of social services created to serve the needs of the community. Figure 2 provides a way to envision this reconceptualization.

While placing the client at the center of service is an obvious concept, client needs often remain
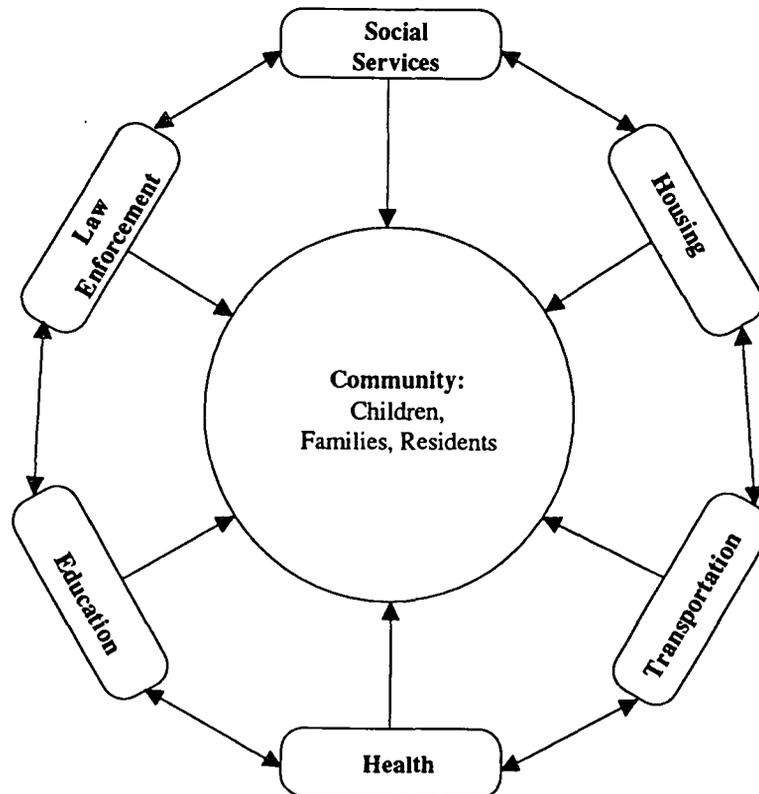
Figure 2. A conceptual model for social service delivery (adapted from Hodgkinson, 1985).

obscured in the wide array of government agencies, organizations, and service providers. Although the integration and coordination of these various services is not as big a problem in rural communities as in metropolitan areas, increased urbanization has led to dis-integration. As can be seen in Figure 2, the community is the center of service delivery. Ironically, service providers often fail to realize the power inherent in a well-coordinated and integrated effort.

In reviewing more than 250 research articles, conference proceedings, and various reports and training materials on rural community development, I was struck by the conspicuous absence of schools as collaborative partners with their communities. The only exception is in the recognition of the valuable role a good school system plays in developing a viable workforce.

Benefiting from Rural Community-School Collaboration

Many rural communities find themselves at the end of the road. Job opportunities have de-

clined. The young and educated have been leaving for metropolitan areas. Businesses have closed. Social services have been relocated on a regional basis. And the fabric of many functional communities has begun to unravel. Mutual survival has become a compelling reason for communities and schools to work collaboratively. It also makes good economic and educational sense.

In the past, working harder was enough to keep rural communities alive. But as Hobbs (1988) has pointed out, rural communities must now work smarter, capitalizing on their inherent strengths and unique features. Many rural schools and communities have already begun to think smarter. Led by the work of Sher (1977), Wigginton (1985), and Paul Nachtigal of the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL), rural schools have taken on a more dynamic and interactive role with their communities. These schools are involved in activites such as School Based Enterprise (Sher, 1977), community study, and school integrated service delivery.

Instances of School-Community Collaboration

We have found many examples of schools collaborating with their communities to ensure that a variety and quality of service reflecting local and societal needs and responsibilities be provided to children and adults. These have ranged from general education to lifelong learning, from day-care programs to meals for the elderly, and from vocational training to small business development. For the purpose of illustration, I have organized the examples into three categories: school-based economic development, school as community center, and community as curriculum.

School-Based Economic Development. This category is best represented by the writings of Jonathan Sher (1977) who pioneered the concept of School-Based Development Enterprise. These ideas were implemented under the direction of Paul Delargy of Georgia State University in the program, Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (REAL). REAL incorporates many of the ideas inherent in the neighborhood lemonade stand. Kids from the neighborhood see the day is hot and reason that people will be thirsty. The children also know they are cute and friendly and everyone in the neighborhood has spare change. They also know which corners are safe and likely to attract the most business. Their market analysis and planning completed, the children secure the needed supplies from parents, and the lemonade stand opens for business. Although this illustration is quite simple, it includes several key elements of REAL: "Students research, plan, set up and operate their own enterprises in cooperation with their local high school or community college (REAL, date unknown, p. 3).

REAL stresses an innovative, experiential approach to learning that occurs within the context of a local high school (and community college) and is not designed solely as a business development venture. Students learn many of the same things as students in traditional programs. However, REAL students go beyond basic academics into the development and application of entrepreneurial skills to a wide range of options chosen by students themselves. An important outcome that differentiates REAL from traditional high school programs is the emphasis on learning about one's community and putting something of value back into the community, whether it be a needed day-care program or a shoe repair business.

REAL has a demonstrated history of success. In the past ten years, about 15 businesses have been started by students. Some of these continue to make a profit; others have gone out of business. However, REAL is stronger today than ever, with substantial development grants from the Ford Foundation and support from a host of other organizations and businesses, all attesting to the benefits REAL Enterprises holds for rural communities.

School As Community Center. In small, rural communities, the school has always functioned as a community center and provided a meeting place and a social and cultural hub for community activities. However, it often does not go much beyond this role into such areas as health, nutrition, day care, and related social service delivery.

Early community education efforts in the United States primarily centered on recreational use of the school and adult education programs during non-school hours. In the mid-1970s, the concept of community school extended to encompass three general areas: "making the curriculum more relevant," "meeting the educational needs of the entire community," and "effective use of social and governmental resources" (Minzey, 1976). Because of the crisis facing small, rural communities, this expanded concept appears more relevant than ever.

Curiously, even though this crisis affects rural schools as hard as rural communities, the level of observable school activity appears minimal. For example, in a report for the Northwest Policy Center at the University of Washington, *Strategies for Rural Social Service Organization and Delivery* (Faas et al., 1991), schools were not mentioned as a service delivery strategy. This is ironic, considering the fact that schools are one of the last elements of infrastructure left in many small, rural communities. They contain access to information through their library and media resources (and distance technology, in many cases), they house a high level of human capability, they are eligible for various types of funding, and they are a large, centrally-located facility. Some schools and their communities recognize both the need and the capability that exists in using the school as a community center. Spears, Combs, and Bailey (1990), in their case studies of linkages between rural schools and their communities, present an example of such a school in York, a Nebraskan town of about 8,300 residents.

York has operated a community-schools program since the early 1970s. Initially, the program focused on adult and lifelong education. But in the late 1970s, program personnel felt that the

negative impact of economic changes occurring in the country required a different approach. A resource council consisting of the director of the community education program; social service providers (hospitals, mental health, senior citizens groups, government programs, etc.); civic groups such as Lions, Scouts, PTA; church leaders; law enforcement; and news media was formed. The resource council served as a needs sensing and communication coordination group within the community.

Out of this group's discussions have emerged ideas that have become reality in York. Some of these include Meals on Wheels, a program that provides meals for the elderly and handicapped; Busy Wheels, which provides dependable and inexpensive transportation for the elderly and handicapped; and Before/After School Childcare, which provides childcare for school-age children.

What appears to be needed in order to enhance these fledgling efforts are teacher education programs designed to inform and train educators in community development: models, success stories, and networks of committed rural educators and community members upon which to build a local vision. The school's traditional role, that of being isolated to a task primarily focused on general education, limits the schools capacity for community collaboration and service. Minzey (1976), a leader in the community education movement of the 1970s, has harsh words for the traditional role of schools in American society:

> Many American schools of today are as
> separated from their communities as if a
> moat existed between them and the rest of
> the environment. . . School people have a
> good idea of what the role of the public
> schools should be. They resent being given
> a greater responsibility, and are opposed
> to outsiders using their buildings and their
> equipment. Boards of education, admin-
> istrators, teachers, and custodians are of-
> ten threatened by such suggested change
> as that implied by community education,
> and either actively or passively resist its
> implementation. (pp. 77-78)

Minzey points out the advantages to be gained by the community school concept:

> The community must be brought into the
> school and the school must be taken into

the community. This interweaving of school and community will tend to enhance both and result in a relationship which more effectively meets the goals of education. (p. 77)

Community As Curriculum. Rural school curriculum comes primarily from metropolitan America (Sher, 1977; Nachtigal, 1982). This does not mean the curriculum or methods are necessarily bad. However, it does mean that a hidden curriculum exists that supplants the values and norms of rural communities. It means that rural (and any minority) students gain knowledge that socializes them into a community of understanding quite different from their own.

Rural students learn more than curriculum content. They may learn to call themselves and their community into question. They become urbanized covertly. However, the response is not to flatly reject curriculum that reflects values and content of the dominant culture, but to place in balance that which is local or endemic. Using the community as curriculum serves as a kind of compensating or balancing mechanism to curriculum whose origin and content reflect metropolitan and urban society. Moreover, local-focused curriculum serves a psychological role helping to validate and legitimize one's identity and membership in a community. Interestingly, many practices that are viewed as school innovations by mainstream educators originated in small, rural schools, such as multigrade classrooms, family grouping, and integrated curriculum (Miller, 1988; Goodlad & Anderson, 1963).

Rural educators have always utilized elements of the community to enhance their school programs. This has generally been in the form of using resources from the local environment such as local residents or historic documents. However, such use seldom treats the community as a focus of study, where the culture, history, political organization or economic status are systematically studied. Two notable examples are Eliot Wigginton's *Foxfire* (Wigginton, 1985) and the work conducted by the Rural Institute at McREL (Nachtigal & Haas, 1991; Nachtigal, Haas, Parker, & Brown, 1989; Spears et al., 1990).

Foxfire, a quarterly magazine, began in 1966 in Wigginton's Appalachian Mountain classroom. In this magazine, students published interviews with older community residents about Appalachian traditions, folklore, and culture. In 1972, a selection

of articles from the magazine were published by Doubleday. Today, Foxfire is alive and thriving, with many schools across the United States engaging students in learning about their communities through interviews, observations, and writing. Several principles undergird the *Foxfire* approach to learning. According to Smith (1991),

> students learn more efficiently when they have a genuine voice in planning what happens in their classrooms, when they produce a product that will be valued by a real audience outside the classroom, and when the state-mandated academic agenda is engaged in a meaningful way, not just teacher-initiated coverage of the material. . . . It is student-centered, community-based, and academically sound. (p. 12)

Foxfire does not abandon existing curriculum, but brings it to life through direct connections with the local community.

The work at McREL, under the guidance of Paul Nachtigal, has focused on teaching youth about their community's economy and characteristics and their roles as active community members. Students also learn how to make practical use of data collection and analysis while learning about the community itself. Students gain new understanding about their communities and develop a perspective that helps them in decisions regarding their future.

Like *Foxfire,* this approach draws heavily upon interview and observation strategies that focus on the community. However, the McREL approach places an added emphasis on other forms of data collection, such as community surveys and the analysis of demographic and economic information. Students engage in community study in collaboration with local residents. Students also work in close collaboration with one another.

These three approaches—community as curriculum, school as community center, and school-based economic development— share a belief in the power to be gained when the community and school work together for their mutual benefit. These three approaches overlap in many ways, especially in the work of Nachtigal and Hass (1991), whose main thrust flows from an economic motive grounded in the benefits of community-focused study.

Adjusting the Balance: Community Well-Being Revisited

Earlier, I reviewed Wilkinson's (1974) three-part conception of community well-being: economic-technical growth, human interpersonal growth, and environmental quality protection. In comparing the various programs of school-community collaboration, ecological-quality protection did not appear in any clearly definable way. Given the current climate of opinion regarding environmental issues, it may have been politically appropriate to downplay this area. However, when I conducted a computer search for rural school programs that addressed both the environment and the community, only six of the 23 examples had any relevance. Of these, most focused on the elementary grades. One notable example examined rural children's conflicting attitudes toward environmental change (Chaib, 1988).

Chaib (1988) found that rural elementary students faced with a decision to build a factory in a somewhat idyllic community favored building the factory because it would mean more children in school and more jobs. The children demonstrated negative attitudes toward consequences to the environment. In other words, they did not appear concerned about the environment if the factory meant jobs and more classmates. Chaib recommend that environmental education must incorporate a "global perspective on society and its future, and must incorporate cultural and ecological development relationships" (p. 1). This finding is consistent with Wilkinson's (1974) observation that scant attention is paid to the environmental dimension in community development efforts. However, he also pointed out that little attention has been paid to the "human interpersonal growth" dimension as well, whereas major emphasis has fallen on "economic-technical growth":

> Human interpersonal growth and protection of environmental quality have been mentioned, but not taken seriously. When they are taken seriously, even a brief analysis of the context within which they have been presented reveals these to be critical ways inimical to the one dimension, economic-technical growth, which has been taken seriously in the rural development literature. Rural development . . . is revealed in the political-administrative sphere to be primarily a code word for

economic development, the value of which has been debated widely. (pp. 6-7)

The good news about the rural school programs we reviewed is the central, pivotal role that interpersonal relations play: students working together with teachers, working cooperatively with other students, and working collaboratively with the community. However, consistent with Wilkinson's observation regarding the environmental dimension, there was little evidence of efforts in this area. Although rural communities, especially those dependent on resource-based economies such as timber and mining, often harbor negative attitudes toward environmental issues, they cannot afford to ignore them any longer. Rural America has become the dumping ground for the waste products of urban core areas. With the decline in extractive industries, the quality of the environment may be one of the last marketable resources available in many rural communities.

Conclusion

One morning you wake up, look out your window and discover the world has changed in unrecognizable ways. You are told that we live in a global village and what happened 10,000 miles away will affect your small, rural community. You are told that the information age is here and that the industrial age is on its way out. When you look around your community you notice there are fewer shops, the hospital has relocated to a larger community, and fewer job opportunities exist. The population appears older, with fewer young people moving into the community. Many of the valued elements of community—trusted, longtime neighbors and friends, active school programs, and community pride—have diminished. But you find yourself paying more taxes. You lock your door at night. You begin to wonder if the community can survive. If it did, you wonder whether the quality of life will suffer irreparable damage. You begin to think about leaving.

Many rural residents find themselves in similar situations. Faced with severe economic distress, the survival of their communities and a valued way of life hang in the balance. But the issue of survival does not center entirely on economics and lack of employment opportunities, as many community development efforts would have us believe. To view the rural crisis solely in economic terms grossly oversimplifies the complex nature of community. It also limits the options for

creative and meaningful solutions that go beyond economics to include other dimensions of community well-being. These include the value of place, quality of environment, one's history as a member of a community, and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of belonging and affiliation among caring friends, neighbors, and relatives. It may be that this psychological sense of community provides the foundation upon which successful community development efforts are built; not the other way around.

Evidence demonstrates that solutions based solely on economic gains create dependency relations between rural communities and urban cores. When production can be more profitable in another region of the country or overseas, operations move. In the case of manufacturing and resource-dependent economies, communities are left with high unemployment and an undereducated workforce. The community begins to unravel as young people leave for job opportunities. Those who remain often lose confidence that they can control their future.

Those concerned about the decline of rural communities feel the most promising direction for revitalization and survival rests with education and the linkages that can be developed and sustained between school and community. This means, among other things, changing the traditional role of the school, a formidable task given the institutional tendency for self-preservation. However, some schools and communities manage to transcend traditional bounds. Three general, but overlapping, approaches for building strong collaborative bonds between schools and communities have been identified.

When the school is used as a community center it serves as both a source of lifelong learning and as a vehicle for the delivery of a wide range of services. Using the community as curriculum, it emphasizes the study of community in all its various dimensions. Lastly, school-based economic development places a major emphasis on developing entrepreneurial skills in rural youth. These three categories provide a way to think about how schools and communities can work together. The real value from these approaches may be the empowerment students develop through learning about their communities and applying that knowledge in meaningful ways. Bell and Sigsworth (1987) summarize this value:

The purpose of basing the curriculum substantially in the things and the people

pupils are familiar with is not to persuade them to remain when their schooling is over, within their community of origin, any more than it is to persuade them that the good life will be found elsewhere. It . . . should . . . enable them to recognize that they have a choice, and thereby, to make an "informed" decision about whether to stay or to go. What it should provide them with is an understanding of the nature of community, an understanding which they can put to use wherever they choose to spend the rest of their lives. (p. 268)

It can be clearly seen from this report that a large number of authorities in rural education and community development believe the survival of small, rural communities can be greatly enhanced when the community and the local school system work together for their mutual benefit. However, little research exists, either qualitative or quantitative, that describes communities that have implemented community-school based development strategies. Currently, the Rural Education Program at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory is engaged in a project to research and develop a process whereby the community and school form a development partnership.

At the outset of this project, both reviews of the research literature and our work in the field have raised many implications for subsequent research. For example, what are the strategic points of intervention for building a support base upon which to design a community development intervention? Further, how do you sustain an intervention, especially once external support is removed? What are effective strategies and approaches for involving the school, both students and staff, in community development efforts? What are effective strategies for involving residents in community development? When schools form partnerships with their communities for the purpose of mutual growth, how does it change student and community perceptions? Do those involved in partnerships develop a greater sense of community? How do differences in communities affect intervention strategies?

To date, our research and development effort in three rural community development sites is beginning to shed light on answers to these questions. We are beginning to see that there are powerful commonalities that unite the residents of these communities. At the same time, we are also beginning to comprehend the difficulty of helping educators see that the school has an integral and supportive role in helping their communities to survive.

References

Bell, A., & Sigsworth, A. (1987). Education and community development: What can the school do? In A. Bell & A. Sigsworth, *The small rural primary school* (pp. 250-277). Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Bryant, M. T., & Grady, M. L. (1990). Community factors threatening rural school district stability. *Research in Rural Education, 6*(3), 21-26.

Chaib, M. (1988). *Environmental education in sparsely populated areas: Conflicting attitudes in student's conception of environmental issues.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 316 360)

Coleman, J. S. (1987). The relations between school and social structure. In M. Hallinan (Ed.), *The social organization of schools: New conceptualizations of the learning process* (pp. 177-204). New York: Plenum.

Comer, J. P., & Haynes, N. M. (1991). Parent involvement in schools: An ecological approach. *The Elementary School Journal, 91*(3), 271-277.

Donaldson, G. A. (1986). Do you need to leave home to grow up? The rural adolescent's dilemma. *Research in Rural Education, 3*(3), 121-125.

Emery, M. (1991, June). Roundtable discussion on youth and rural schools. A National Conference on Rural Adult Education Initiatives, hosted by Rural Clearinghouse for Lifelong Education and Development, Kansas City, Missouri.

Faas, R. C., Barron, J. C., Smith, G. W., Afoaku, O., & Irwin, L. (1991, March). *Strategies for rural social service organziation and delivery.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Northwest Policy Center.

Fisher, J. (1981, August) Community hit by numbness. *Kellogg Evening News* 1-2.

Goodlad, J. I., & Anderson, R. H. (1963). *The nongraded elementary school.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World.

Harrison, D. S., & Seib, J. (1990). Toward "one region": Strengthening rural-urban economic linkages. In *A Northwest Reader*, (pp. 81-95). Seattle: University of Washington, Northwest Policy Center.

Hobbs, D. (1987, October). *Learning to find the "niches": Rural education and vitalizing rural communities*. Prepared for the National Rural Education Research Forum, Lake Placid, NY: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

Hobbs, D. (1988). *Community economic development innovation: The key to rural school improvement and rural revitalization*. Kansas City, MO: Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory.

Hodgkinson, H. L. (1989). *The same client: The demographics of education and service delivery systems*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 312 757)

Hulsebosch, P. L. (1991). Beauty in the eye of the beholder: How and why teachers involve parents. *International Journal of Educational Research, 15*(2), 183-200.

Koepke, M. (1991). Going, going, gone. *Teacher Magazine, 2*(8), 41-46.

Kohlenberg, E., & Kohlenberg, D. (1991). *Human services in small towns and rural areas: Linking distant providers with community care systems*. Seattle: University of Washington, Northwest Policy Center.

McCracken, J. D. (1988). Community leaders' perceptions of the importance of rural community schools. *Journal of Rural and Small Schools, 3*(2), 12-15.

Miller, B. A. (1988). *Teacher preparation for rural schools*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Miller, B. A. (1990). Hard times in Mineral Valley: Rural decline, cooperation, and survival in the Stafford School District. *Peabody Journal of Education, 67*(4), 90-117.

Miller, B. A. (1991). [Hanging on: Rural decline, cooperation, and survival in the Stafford School District]. Unpublished raw data.

Miller, B. A., & Hull, J. L. (1991). [Overcoming professional isolation in small, rural schools]. Unpublished raw data.

Minzey, J. D. (1976). Community education. In S. E. Goodman (Ed.), *Handbook on contemporary education* (pp. 75-78). New York: R. R. Bowker Company.

Minzey, J. D., & LeTarte, C. (1972). *Community education: From program to process*. Midland, MI: Pendell.

Monk D. H., & Haller, E. J. (1986). *Organizational alternatives for small rural schools: Final report to the legislature of the State of New York*. New York: Cornell University.

Nachtigal, P. M. (1982). *Rural education: In search of a better way*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Nachtigal, P. M., Haas, T., Parker, S., & Brown, N. (1989). *Noteworthy*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory.

Nachtigal, P. M., & Haas, T. (1991, June). *North Dakota rural public school and rural community economic development project*. A paper prepared for the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory. Aurora, CO.

National Governor's Association. (1988). *Rural development policy options workshops: Criticial issues and options in developing a new rural policy for the nation*. National Governor's Association: Reno, NV.

Peshkin, A. (1978). *Growing up American: Schooling and the survival of community*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

REAL (Unknown) *Program description*. Athens, GA: REAL Enterprises.

Reid, J.N. (1988, December). *Rural areas in the 1980s: Prologue to the 21st century*. Paper presented at the Appalachia Educational Laboratory's Annual State Educational Policy Symposium, Louisville, KY. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 303 304)

Rosenfeld, S. (1985). The high school in a rural economy. *Foresight, 3*(2), 1-21.

Sandmann, L. R. (1988). *Why economic development is not enough: Need for a comprehensive community approach to assist distressed communities*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 304 544)

Sederberg, C. H. (1987). Economic role of school districts in rural communities. *Research in Rural Education, 4*(3), 125-130.

Sher, J. P. (1977). School-based community development corporations: A new strategy for education and development in rural America. In J. Sher (Ed.), *Education in rural America* (pp. 291-305). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Smith, C.L. (1991). *Core and periphery relationships of resource-based communities*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University.

Sommers, P. W., Whitelaw, W. E., Niemi, E., & Harrison, D. S. (1988). *The once and future Northwest.* Seattle: University of Washington, Northwest Policy Center, Institute for Public Policy and Management.

Sommers, P. W., & Mermelstein, J. (1988). Community development and the rural crisis: Problem-strategy fit. *Journal of the Community Development Society, 19*(2), 93-107.

Spears, J. D., Combs, L. R., & Bailey, G. (1990). *Accommodating change and diversity: Linking rural schools to communities.* (A report of the Ford Western Taskforce). Manhattan, KS: Rural Clearinghouse for Lifelong Education and Development.

State Education Department/SUNY. (December, 1987). *Education and community renewal: Assessment of needs in distressed communities.* Albany, NY: SUNY, The State Education Department, Educational Research Service Unit.

Stoneall, L. (1983). Bringing women into community studies: A rural midwestern case study. *Journal of the Community Development Society, 14*(1), 17-29.

Sundet, P., & Mermelstein, J. (1988). Community development and the rural crisis: Problem-strategy fit. *Journal of the Community Development Society, 19*(2), 93-107.

Swanson, L. L., & Butler, M. A. (1988). Human resource base of rural economies. In *Rural economic development in the 1980s: Prospects for the future.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Swyt, D. (1987). *The technologies of the third era of the U.S. workforce.* (Report to the National Academy of Science's Panel on Technology and Employment). Washington, DC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 300 651)

U.S. Congress. (1989). *Working families at the margins: The uncertain future of America's small towns.* (Hearing before the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. House of Representatives, 101st Congress, 1st Session). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 316 361)

U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment. (1991). *Rural America at the crossroads: Networking for the future,* OTA-TCT-471. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Education (in press). *Rural schools facing enrollment decline: Problems and prosects, VII* (Contract No. LC90086006). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Wigginton, E. (1985). *Sometimes a shining moment: The Foxfire experience.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.

Wilkinson, K. P. (1974). *Social well-being and rural community development: Issues in policy and theory.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 122 978)