Rural Revitalization: Aging Communities and Youth Retention & Attraction Strategies

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Introductions

• Name & Affiliation
• Current understanding of aging communities and youth retention & attraction strategies
What will cover today

- **Class description:**
  Given recent and severe financial constraints, we will explore the need for enhanced educational pipelines, and inter-agency collaborations. Various tools for understanding and exploring local and regional context (trends, maps, etc.) will be shared. Do we want to change the description?

- **Within the context of: Community Revitalization & Aging of Rural Communities**
  - Aging of NY communities
  - Reasons communities are aging
  - Why aging is a concern and for whom
  - Approaches to youth retention & attraction
  - Framing a solution in your community
Learning Objectives

- Our goal is that you will..
  - Understand that many NY communities are aging and the implications of this issue
  - Be able to identify reasons why communities are aging
  - Increase your awareness of youth retention and attraction strategies
  - Consider ways village, city, town and local governments can support youth retention & attraction
Is your community/region aging?

DISCUSSION

• How do you know?
• Why or why not?
Hallowing out the Middle, Rural Education in the 21st Century, Learning to Leave

http://hollowingoutthemiddle.com/
What is the age structure of NY communities?

• Several useful websites
  • http://pad.human.cornell.edu
  • http://NYRuralSchools.org
  • http://headwaterseconomics.org

• Why should we care?
  • http://pfprogress.org - “Closed Schools, Open Minds...opportunities for adaptive reuse”
Why are aging communities a concern?

DISCUSSION

- Is this issue being discussed in your community/region?
- Who is discussing it?
- What are the concerns?
Why are aging communities a concern?

- Young people regenerate
- Young people are innovators
- Young people support the tax base
- Young people care for older citizens

**This is not to say older people don’t do all of these things and more as well....**
Why are aging communities a concern?

Cornelia & Jan Flora, Iowa State University
http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/cflora/ncrcrd/capitals.html
Why are communities aging?
DISCUSSION
Residential Expectations of Young Adults in New York’s Southern Tier

DAVID BROWN, SCOTT SANDERS & MAX PFEFFER
Why are communities aging?
Cornell University, Development Sociology (Brown, Sanders, & Pfeffer 2010)

- **Purpose:**
  - To examine where well prepared young adults expect to live at age 30
  - To understand the factors that affect their residential expectations

- **Methods:**
  - Interviews w/ key informants
  - Focus groups w/ high school students
  - Facebook survey Class of 2008 (4 high schools)
Why are communities aging?
Cornell University, Development Sociology (Brown, Sanders, & Pfeffer 2010)

- **Findings:**
  - Young adults have a clear idea of what they want to do, and where they expect to live early in their college careers
    - Local college students expect to be geographically mobile
    - Most expect to live *outside of this region* at age 30
  - Expectations to live elsewhere at age 30 respond to:
    - Local economic conditions and perceived lack of job prospects
    - Lack of confidence in local leaders efforts to improve conditions
    - Dissatisfaction with community resources
  - Not just jobs, jobs, jobs
    - Social factors like proximity to family and friends is an anchor
Satisfaction and Perceived Importance of Community Characteristics

**Economic**
- Good paying job
- Cost of living
- Chances to get ahead

**Environment**
- Clean environment
- Outdoor recreation

**Community**
- Good quality schools
- Proximity to family
- Opinions valued
Residential Expectations by Hometown Characteristics: Economic

College bound respondents with residential expectation, N=74, Chi² = .04
Residential Expectations by Hometown Characteristics: Environment

College bound respondents with residential expectation, N=65, Chi² = .02
Residential Expectations by Hometown Characteristics: Community

College bound respondents with residential expectation, N=68, Chi² = .03
Why are communities aging?

Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What it Means for America (Carr & Kefalas, 2009 [link]

- **Purpose:**
  - Understand what happens to rural communities when the “creative-class” migrates to cities

- **Methods:**
  - Moved to community in Iowa
  - Survey members of 6 graduating classes: 3 recent (’95-’97); 3 mature (’90-’93)
  - Conversations with community leaders, teachers, employers, state legislators
Why are communities aging?

Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What it Means for America (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) [http://hollowingoutthemiddle.com/](http://hollowingoutthemiddle.com/)

• Findings

  ▫ Types of young people
    • “Stayers” – working class
    • “Achievers” – high achievers, college-bound
    • “Seekers” – join military to see the world
    • “Returners” – eventually come back to hometown

  ▫ Rural communities are “playing a pivotal part” in their own decline by...
    • “Pushing out their best and brightest”
    • “Underinvesting” in those who stay
Why are communities aging?

Engaging Young People: Revitalizing Rural Communities (Schroeder, May 2014)
Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

• **Purpose:**
  - Looked at young peoples’ perspectives on:
    - Communities
    - Education
    - Career
    - Desire to stay or return to their home communities

• **Methods:**
  - National web-based survey of over 40,000 jr. & sr. high students (>90% response rate)
Why are communities aging?

Engaging Young People: Revitalizing Rural Communities (Schroeder, May 2014)
Center for Rural Entrepreneurship

• Findings ("remarkably consistent" across locations)
  ▫ Young people like where they live
    • 46% rated their community as above average or excellent
    • 50% see selves living there if career opps are available
  ▫ But, they don’t see opportunities for them
    • 42% see greater opportunity outside of home community
    • 18% noted lack of entertainment opps
    • 14% noted lack of shopping opps
    • 64% never asked by adult on how to make community attractive to young adults
  ▫ And, perceive local adults encouraging them to go elsewhere
Why are communities aging? The Latest word...

- Educational Sorting and Residential Aspirations...What Are the Contributions of Schools to Brain Drain?
- Top achievers have the greatest affinity to their local community. Info on local econ situation pushes them away.
- Youth pay attention to signals from schools, adults, and local fiscal image.
Why are communities aging?

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

▫ Absence or perceived absence of economic opportunity
▫ Absence of opportunities for young people to meaningfully engage in shaping community futures
▫ Deliberate and intentional efforts to send young people away...forever
Why are aging communities a concern?

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Impacts are social, economic, and entwined
- The loss of young people contributes to a downward spiral of community assets
- This is an issue of community vitality and sustainability
Who are aging communities a concern for?

- Employers
- Educators
- Community development organizations
- Local government
- Younger people
- Older people

EVERYONE
Who are aging communities an opportunity for?

- Employers
- Educators
- Community development organizations
- Local government
- Younger people
- Older people

EVERYONE
BREAK
What can be done to encourage youth retention and attraction?

**DISCUSSION**

- What intentional efforts are planned or underway in your communities and regions?
- How effective are these strategies?
- Are these efforts being evaluated?
- What other efforts could serve a youth retention and attraction purpose?
What can be done to encourage youth retention and attraction?

- Strategies from the research
- Provide social and economic opportunity
  - Ask young people about what is important to them in their community & future (Schroeder 2014)
  - Engage young people in social affairs/leadership positions (Schroeder 2014)
  - Teach entrepreneurship (Schroeder 2014)
  - Revamp the educational system to invest in kids that don’t leave (Carr & Kafelas, 2009)
    - Provide educational opportunities that enable young people to stay local (Schroeder 2014)
  - Support rural business development
- BE DELIBERATE – it isn’t happening by default
What can be done to encourage youth retention and attraction?

- Strategies in practice
  - Individual institutional strategies
    - K-12, Colleges & Universities
    - Organizations
    - Employers
    - Local governments
  - Multi-institutional practices
    - Regional Education to Workforce Pipelines
Institutional Strategies
K-12, Colleges & Universities

• The CALS NYS Internship Program (Cornell University)
• Food Processing Technology Program (SUNY Genesee Community College)
• The Sandbox (Syracuse University)
Institutional Strategies
Organizations

- **Business Education Alliance** (Genesee County Chamber of Commerce)
  - Liaison between businesses & schools for career readiness
- **Pipeline for Progress & 40 Below Syracuse**
  - Young professional groups committed to their communities/region
- **NYS Municipal Exchange (MIX)**
Institutional Strategies

Employers

• Student (Retention)
  ▫ Job shadowing, Internships, Career Fairs, Tours, etc.
  ▫ High School job opportunities
  ▫ College Scholarships

• New Employees (Attraction)
  ▫ Community service requirement
  ▫ Mentoring programs
  ▫ Website dedicated to highlighting regional assets
Institutional Strategies Governments

• **Canadian Examples**
  - [Newfoundland and Labrador Government](#)
    - Created a youth engagement minister
    - Created a quarterly youth partnership forum for youth to advise government on issues of importance to them,
    - Committed 3-year $15 million YR & A w/in the province.
  - [Attracting and Retaining People to Rural Alberta: A List of Resources and Literature Review](#)
    - Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development publication
    - designed to support local efforts to attract & retain young people+
Education to Workforce Pipelines

- **STRIVE Together Cincinnati & Kentucky**
  - Initiative to improve educational attainment and prepare young people with skills for today’s workforce
  - Focus is “cradle to career”
  - Highly coordinated/collaborative approach
  - Statistically definable goals

- **Programs**
  - Community Learning Centers
  - Adult Education
  - Veterans Diplomas
  - Family & Civic Engagement
  - College & Career Readiness
Education to Workforce Pipelines

- **STEPUP** – Southern Tier Educational Pipeline United Partnership
  - Initiated by SUNY Broome Community College
  - Education & Business Partnership
  - Supports Career & College readiness
What can be done to encourage youth retention & attraction?

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Multiple institutional types are pursuing a range of strategies
- Need to evaluate
- Each is important but coordination across institutions w/in regions seems to make a difference.
One more Lens (to help not confuse)

• Communities and the organizations in which they operate are enabled and constrained by...
  ▫ Regulative Institutions
    • Rules, laws, regs with repercussions
  ▫ Normative Institutions
    • Professional norms and practices
  ▫ Cultural-Cognitive Institutions
    • Taken-for-granted ways of seeing and doing
Framing a solution in your community

- What are opportunities to engage young people in your community?
- How might you as a clerk contribute to youth engagement in your community?
- What specific partners would you work with?
- What will you do when you get home?
Local Government Strategies

- Meet w/ young people to understand their needs & interests
- Promote local leadership opportunities for young people
- Pass a resolution supporting YR& A strategies
- Partner with education (K-12, & colleges/universities) businesses, organizations when opportunities arise