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ABSTRACT

Limited to residents of small towns, villages and the rural open country, the study assessed the implications of the rural turnaround in the southern Ohio counties of Athens, Gallia, Jackson, Meigs, and Vinton. All five counties experienced outmigration in the 1950s, and all but Athens County lost population through outmigration in the 1960s. In the turnaround period of 1970 to 1975, all counties but Athens experienced net inmigration. Questionnaires were mailed to 1,134 recent migrants to the area. A follow-up postcard was sent to non-respondents. Phone calls were then made to a sample of non-respondents. Data were obtained from 222 returned questionnaires and 99 migrants who were called. Questionnaires were also mailed to 50 community leaders from each county, except Athens; 191 questionnaires were completed. Among the findings were that 66.2% of the migrants saw their current residence as substantially better as a place to raise children than their previous one and about 40% saw housing, education and solid waste pick-up as worse; about 37% of the leaders felt that the migrants were responsible for the substantial rise in property values; over 72% of the leaders saw a substantial increase in the demand for water and sewage services; 31% of the leaders noted a substantial increase and 35% indicated a slight increase in business activity; and 7% of the leaders said the new residents had no effect on the community, 14% saw little effect, and nearly half did not feel strongly enough to comment at all. (NQ)

THE RURAL TURNAROUND IN OHIO: SOME EVIDENCE RELATED TO IMPLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The migration reversal which has been responsible for nonmetropolitan growth in certain areas of the U.S. is no longer a new phenomenon. Since first brought to our attention by Beale (1975), we have seen continuing documentation of growth in areas previously characterized by out-migration and population decline. Whether it is called the rural renaissance, rural revival, or rural turnaround, each month seems to bring new documentation of its existence.

The second generation of research is just now appearing on the scene. Most of this involves gaining a greater depth of understanding of the recent migration patterns. We know of several "in progress" research projects with this objective, but little has reached print at this stage. At the April meeting of the Population Association of America in Atlanta, we reported on one such project in Ohio (Thomas and Bachtel, 1978). That paper dealt with the who and why of the rural turnaround in five Ohio counties. The current paper, from the same study, deals with the implications of the trend from an area and community perspective.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this paper is to make an early assessment of the implications of the rural turnaround for the areas or communities involved. Obviously, the long range effects of the new growth may not be known for some time. However, we should be able to make some assessment of the potential consequences at the present time. The present research is largely exploratory and descriptive, but is a necessary first step which will give us a better idea of the questions which need to be asked and the direction for further research.

THE STUDY AREA

The five county area which serves as the locale of the current study is located in the unglaciated area of southern Ohio. The area is primarily rural, with the city of Athens being the only place over 10,000 in population. With the exception of Athens County, the area generally experienced either slow growth or population decline between 1940 and 1970. Table 1 shows that all five counties experienced outmigration in the 1950's and all but Athens County lost population through outmigration in the 1960's.

TABLE 1

Net Migration Rate, Five Counties, 1950-60, 1960-70, and 1970-75

County	1970-75	1960-70	1950-60
Athens	-10.1	10.5	-6.3
Gallia	9.0	-8.5	-5.4
Jackson	3.8	-12.8	-6.6
Meigs	6.5	-13.2	-11.6
Vinton	6.2	-14.3	-15.4

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1976), USDA (1975) and USDA (1965).

In the turnaround period of 1970 to 1975, all counties but Athens have experienced net inmigration.

A note is in order regarding Athens County. This county is a special case, due to it's being the location of Ohio University. The county totals strongly reflect changes in enrollment at the University. During the 1960's, Ohio University was rapidly gaining enrollment, giving Athens County a high inmigration rate. The early 1970's was a period of declining enrollment and outmigration. It was originally thought that Athens County should be excluded from the study. However, it was felt that the decline in Athens city might be masking a rural turnaround in the rest of the county. Subsequent population estimates from the Census Bureau showed this to be the case, and Athens was included in the survey.

Table 2 presents a series of profile statistics for the five counties. State averages are also included for comparison.

probably not been leaving the area due to the relatively higher proportions over 65 years of age.

The average educational level was one-and-a-half to two years below the average, again with the exception of Athens County. Median income was well below the state average and up to three times the state norm were under the Census Bureau poverty level. The area is predominantly white.

Variation is found in employment in the five counties. Jackson and Vinton Counties were slightly under the average in manufacturing employment, with the other three counties well below. All but Athens had less white collar employment than average. All counties had a higher unemployment rate than the state, with Vinton County more than double the average.

METHODOLOGY

The present study involved two separate surveys. One was a survey of recent migrants to Southern Ohio. The other was a survey of community leaders in the study area.

Migrant Survey

Sixty-three post offices in the five county study area were contacted. Postmasters and rural mail carriers were asked to provide a list of names and addresses of people who had moved into their area since 1970. Only two of the post offices contacted refused to co-operate. This procedure resulted in a list of approximately 3500 names of new residents.

The study was limited to residents of small towns, villages and the rural open country. The incorporated area of the three largest cities in the area was excluded. This included the cities of Athens, Gallipolis

and Jackson. Table 3 shows that none of the three cities participated in the rural turnaround to any significant extent. In fact, both Athens and Gallipolis lost population between 1970 and 1975. Jackson grew by only 2.9 percent during the same period.

TABLE 3

Comparison of County and City Population Change for Athens, Jackson and Gallia Counties, 1970-1975

Area	Percent Population Change 1970-1975
Athens County	-7.5
Athens City	+18.3
Balance of County	+0.8
Jackson County	+7.2
Jackson City	+2.9
Balance of County	+8.9
Gallia County	+9.7
Gallipolis City	-5.2
Balance of County	+16.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1977)

Every third name of the new residents list was selected for inclusion in the sample. This resulted in a total of 1,134 names, each of which received a mailed questionnaire, stamped return envelope, and cover letter explaining the nature of the research. The questionnaire had previously been critiqued by colleagues and submitted to a pre-test by a sample from the migrants list.

The original list of names was in approximate proportion to the population size of each of the five counties in the study area. Thus, no attempt was made to weight the sample. In addition, it is the intent of the study to focus on the area as a five county region and not to specify county results unless the findings show unusual differentials.

Three weeks after the original mailing, a follow-up postcard was sent to non-respondents. One month later, an attempt was made to phone a sample of nonrespondents. Using a statewide telephone system, 234 phone calls were made. These calls, plus information on some of the previously returned questionnaires, revealed a condition that had not been expected, at least not in the magnitude that existed. This was the fact that many of those receiving questionnaires were not migrants in the sense used in the study. The guidelines used in this research considered people to be migrant if they had moved from anywhere outside the five county study area to anywhere within the five counties. Many of those on the new resident lists obtained from the post offices were people who had moved within the same county or within the five county region. Many of those contacted by telephone indicated that since the questions were aimed at movers from outside the area, they did not return the form.

Thus, a response rate may be calculated in several different ways. Of the original sample, 303 questionnaires were returned, a response of 26.7 percent. However, 31 of these were from movers within the region and not migrants from outside, resulting in 222 migrants giving a response rate of 19.6 percent.

Making additional assumptions, however, a more realistic rate of response may be obtained. Of the 234 telephone calls made, 135 or 57.7 percent were nonmigrants. If the assumption is made that this is representative of the entire residents list, then only 42.3 percent of those who received questionnaires were actually eligible for the study. Only 480 of the original sample were migrants, (42.3 percent of 1,134). The

return of 222 questionnaires then represents a 46.3 percent return rate. Since the telephone calls were made at random in all five counties, the above assumption would appear to be reasonable.

In addition, some information was collected from the 99 migrants who were telephoned and had not returned questionnaires. A comparison of the telephone respondents with those returning questionnaires reveals a minimum of difference.

Leaders Survey.

Several questions regarding population change and migration were included in a survey of community leaders being conducted in the study area concurrently with the migrant survey.

In this study, Athens county was excluded from the survey area due to difficulties in getting co-operation in the area.* Communities' leaders in the other four counties were identified by the reputational approach. Approximately 50 leaders from each county were mailed a pre-tested questionnaire. Follow-ups to the leaders were made by telephone. A total of 191 completed questionnaires were obtained with 45 from Vinton County, 46 from both Gallia and Jackson, and 52 from Meigs County.

FINDINGS - MIGRANT SURVEY

Before detailing the specific findings related to the implications of in-migration, we will present a summary of findings regarding the migrants to the study area and their reasons for moving.** In brief:

*For a more complete statement on the Leaders Survey and Methodology, see (Rohrer, 1977).

**For a more complete analysis, see (Thomas, 1978).

1. Migrants represent a full range of ages, but are heaviest in the 25-34 age group and represent a younger age structure than the natives.
2. About 2 out of 5 migrants were born outside Ohio, with half of those being born in West Virginia. Of those born in Ohio, about half were born in the study area counties or adjacent counties.
3. Two-thirds of the new residents are employed full-time. Thirteen percent are retired. A full range of occupations is represented, with a quarter employed in skilled blue collar jobs. Seventeen percent hold professional positions.
4. Less than ten percent of the movers farm full time, but 17 percent own a farm.
5. The average educational level of migrants is higher than the native population. Three of four migrants are high school graduates, and one in five has a college degree.
6. The new residents represent a wide spread in family incomes, with a median of slightly over $12,000. Equal proportions earn under $5,000 and over $20,000 (17%).
7. The most prevalent reasons given for moving centered around the attractiveness of the country or the detractions of the city. Other prominent responses include returning home and job related reasons.
8. One of every four migrants had been reared on a farm, with one in ten raised in a metropolitan area.
9. About two of five migrants moved into the study area from outside Ohio, with West Virginia being the most prominent state of origin. Of the in-state migrants, 20 percent moved from counties adjacent to the study area, and over three-fourths came from metropolitan

areas. One in three in-state migrants moved from Franklin County.

10. Forty-three percent of the new residents moved into the open country areas of the study counties. Other prominent locations were villages and farm residences.

11. Nearly three of five movers own or are buying a home. About 20 percent own mobile homes. One quarter of the migrants reported having trouble finding a place to live when they moved.

12. Three-fourths of the respondents are employed in the study area, with about 70 percent driving less than 20 miles to work.

In addition to the above previously reported findings, we have evidence related to how migrants view their new community. Certainly, the comparisons that new residents make with their previous residences will have implications for the areas of destination.

Comparison of Community Factors

Migrants were asked to rate 12 community factors as better, the same, or worse than in their previous residence. Table 4 shows only two areas where their current residence is substantially better. These are: as a place to raise children and pollution, both seen as better by about two-thirds of the migrants. Almost equal numbers placed recreational facilities in the three categories of better, the same, and worse. The cost of living was seen as better by a small margin over those who saw it as worse (31 percent to 24 percent).

One the other side, almost two-thirds of the migrants thought that both job opportunities and shopping facilities were worse than in their former communities. Over one-half said medical services were worse.

Housing, education and solid waste pick-up were seen as worse by about 40 percent of the migrants.

Comparison of Community Factors by Area Moved From

Does the comparison of current and previous communities differ for migrants moving from larger cities than for other migrants? Insight on this can be gained from a cross classification of migrants by area of origin and their assessment of community factors.

Table 5 shows percentages of respondents in each residence category who see their current residence as better than their previous one on each factor. Only two factors show a majority of migrants as better satisfied than previously. Migrants from all residence categories view their current residence as a better place to raise children. Large city and metropolitan movers were particularly prone to see this factor as better.

All categories except movers from farms had a majority of respondents viewing the pollution situation as better in their current residence.

Cost of living tended to be viewed as better by the larger urban migrants than those from rural areas. Farm and village migrants tended to rate medical facilities better than urban movers.

The obverse of the above data is presented in Table 6, where percentages of migrants rating community factors as worse are cross-classified by area of origin.

Job opportunities, shopping facilities, and medical facilities were generally rated as worse by most groups. Only in the farm and village mover categories did less than half of the respondents rate job opportunities as worse. Almost three-fourths of the migrants from large cities,

study. Almost 78 percent of the migrants reported having no housing problems when they moved into the area.

Leaders were asked to specify the type of housing problems that new people experienced. Rental problems, a general lack of housing, and a lack of selection were all mentioned by over 20 percent of the leaders who specified a problem area (Table 10). This is consistent with the problems mentioned by migrants who had housing trouble. Their main complaints were that there was nothing available to buy or to rent. Perhaps significantly, the cost of housing was mentioned by less than 10 percent of either leaders or migrants.

Along the line of cost, leaders were asked about the change in property values in recent years. Eighty-eight percent said that property values had risen substantially (Table 11). This was to be expected, since there are few areas where inflation has not pushed values up. Thus, leaders were then asked if they thought that the rise in property values had been caused by the increasing number of people moving into their communities. Nearly half (47.5 percent) did not think the increase had been caused by migration. About 37 percent thought migrants were responsible for the rise with the remainder indicating that they didn't know (Table 12).

Community Services and Facilities

Leaders were asked to assess the change in demand for various services and facilities in their communities. Tables 13 through 18 report the findings on leader's perception of demand for water and sewage, schools and public officials, as well as an assessment of medical facilities and changes in business activity.

Over 72 percent of the leaders saw a substantial increase in the demand for water and sewage services. Some of this increased demand would probably have occurred without immigration as a result of a general trend toward better community water and sewage systems. However, it seems likely that the substantial increase noted is also a result of the recent population growth.

A lesser effect is noted for school enrollment. Only about 14 percent of the leaders detected a substantial increase in this area. However, nearly half noted a slight increase. This could be significant in light of the lower birth rate in recent years and the past history of out-migration from the study area.

An attempt was made to ascertain the grade level at which school enrollment was increasing the most. However, over half of the respondents indicated that they didn't know where the growth was taking place. Those who did respond indicated a somewhat greater growth in the elementary grades, as opposed to high school.

Fifty-seven percent of the leaders indicated that there had been a substantial increase in the demand for services from local officials such as Township Trustees, Sheriff, Mayor, etc. An additional 36 percent noted a slight increase.

Leaders were asked if the existing medical facilities were adequate to serve the needs of the area. Slightly less than one-half said that the medical facilities were less than adequate. Only thirteen percent saw their facilities as more than adequate.

On the subject of business activity, 31 percent noted a substantial increase and 35 percent indicated a slight increase in business activity.

When asked to specify what type of business had experienced the greatest increase, there was a wide variety of responses. About 21 percent mentioned coal mining activity with retail stores, grocery stores, manufacturing and restaurants each being mentioned by between 10 and 15 percent of the respondents.

Acceptance of New Residents

Leaders were asked if new people generally feel accepted by the community as a whole. Over 60 percent felt the newcomers were accepted, while an additional 37 percent felt that they were accepted with reservations (Table 19).

General Effect

In a final question, community leaders were asked, in an open-ended question, what effects new people had on the community. Nearly half of the leaders apparently did not feel strongly enough about the effects to comment at all. Seven percent said the new residents had no effect at all and 14 percent saw little effect. The remainder of the responses were categorized as general positive and general negative effects. The positive reactions outweighed the negative by about 9 to 1 (Table 20).

Discussion

From the perspective of the local community, there can be little doubt that the rural turnaround represents a mixed blessing. The immigration reverses a trend of population decline which saw a substantial out migration of young adults. It was often said that the type of area, represented by the five counties of the present study, was caught in a visians cycle. Because the area was depressed, in economic and social terms, many of the youth found it advantagous to leave the region. Their loss represented a loss of human capital and meant fewer people were left to support the fixed cost of local services. It also meant a loss of potential leadership for organizations and institutions. Thus, the out migration made communities with social and economic problems even less desirable as places to live which in turn gave further inpetus to out migration.

The new trend, thus, represents a break in that visions cycle with the prospect for an improved economy and increased organizational and institutional viability.

The other side of the mixed blessing is the potential for conflict between natives and newcomers. Sorenson (1976) suggests that newcomers may want to limit new growth, while the leadership of the community, particularly as represented by the Chamber of Commerce, will want to foster development. This would be consistant with the notion that each migrant wants to be the lest new resident in an area, preserving the small rural character of the community.

There is, however, another possibility. The migrants may be the ones who press for changes. For example, the migrants might decide that

they want services equivalent to what existed in the urban areas that they left. This could be in the form of more modern school facilities, water and sewage projects, garbage collection, improved medical facilities, etc. The resultant tax increases to provide for these services might well be viewed negatively by the original populace.

It would seem to the authors that the consequences of the turnaround will depend upon a number of factors. One of these is the characteristics of the migrants in the stream. The age, education, income, origin, occupation, etc. status of the migrants will be significant factors. In addition, how the migrants view their new community and how the natives view the newcomers will help to determine the relationships which will emerge as time passes.

From the present study, there are some contributions to each of the above factors. First, the migrant stream is not homogenous on any of the social or economic characteristics. While they are younger than the native population, they represent the full age spectrum. The migrants are not, as some had feared, all over 65 years old and moving for retirement. Likewise, there is a mixture of occupations, incomes and education. There is also vanation in areas of origin of migrants. They are not all from metropolitan areas, nor are they all from areas adjacent to the turnaround region. This would seem to indicate a greater potential for positive implications than if the migrants were homogeneous on these characteristics.

A more negative viewpoint might emerge from the data on the migrants' views of their new communities. The migrants had more negative views of their new communities than positive ones, when compared with their previous residences. Such factors as job opportunities, medical facilities, housing and education were not favorably compared by the migrants.

However, the fact that over four-fifths of the migrants indicated that they plan to stay in their new communities could be taken as an indication that they do not see these factors as off-setting the positive aspects of the region. Nevertheless, the migrants could be a force in efforts to bring about changes in the factors that they see as less desirable than those to which they were accustomed.

The third component of this implications matrix, how the community views the migrants, is also mixed. The community leaders surveyed here did not see the migrants as primarily responsible for increasing property values, nor did they overwhelmingly note increased demands on community services. They noted some increases in demand in areas such as schools, medical facilities, business activity, etc. There did not seem to be a strong feeling against the newcomers, in fact, the opposite attitude seemed to be evident.

In summary, the final word on implications of the rural turnaround in Southern Ohio will depend on the pasage of time and on more definitive community and migration research. It seems safest to say at this point, that the rural turnaround is neither the panacea for the problems that have faced this area for decades, nor is it the disruptive influence that some might have anticipated.

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TABLE 4

Comparison of Current and Previous Residences on Selected Community Factors

Factor	Number				Percent			
	Better	Same	Worse	Total	Better	Same	Worse	Total
Adequate Housing	29	88	95	212	13.7	41.5	44.8	100.0
Job Opportunities	25	47	138	210	11.9	22.4	65.7	100.0
Recreational Facilities	74	65	71	210	35.2	30.9	33.8	100.0
Pollution	136	44	31	211	64.5	20.9	14.7	100.0
Cost of Living	67	95	51	213	31.5	44.6	23.9	100.0
Education-Schools	46	78	82	206	22.3	37.9	39.8	100.0
Solid Waste Pickup	29	98	83	210	13.8	46.7	39.5	100.0
Place to Raise Children	139	46	25	210	66.2	21.9	11.9	100.0
Medical Services	31	67	115	213	14.6	31.5	54.0	100.0
Religious Facilities	35	150	25	210	16.7	71.4	11.9	100.0
Welfare Services	30	122	33	185	16.2	65.9	17.8	100.0
Shopping Facilities	25	50	138	213	11.7	23.5	64.8	100.0

TABLE 5

Comparison of Community Factors by Area Moved From:
Percent Rating Factors as Better Than in Previous Community

Factor	Area Moved From: Farm	Open Country	Village	Town	City	Large City	Metro-politan	Total
Housing	-0-	13.0	9.5	14.3	13.5	21.1	16.4	13.7
Job Opportunities	20.0	13.0	19.0	15.0	9.8	15.8	6.6	11.9
Recreational Facilities	33.3	39.1	35.0	23.8	34.6	33.3	39.3	35.2
Pollution	33.3	56.5	68.4	61.9	59.6	68.4	77.4	64.5
Cost of Living	20.0	22.7	28.6	19.0	37.7	36.8	35.5	31.5
Education--Schools	13.3	21.7	30.0	30.0	15.7	22.2	25.4	22.3
Solid Waste Pick-up	20.0	26.1	35.0	4.8	7.7	-0	13.1	13.8
Place to Raise Children	66.7	52.2	60.0	61.9	58.8	7	77.4	66.2
Medical Facilities	33.3	13.0	38.1	9.5	5.7	10.5	13.1	14.6
Religious Facilities	13.3	8.7	19.0	9.5	9.8	15.8	28.3	16.7
Welfare Services	33.3	9.1	27.8	-0-	16.7	5.6	20.0	16.2
Shopping Facilities	20.0	13.0	23.8	4.8	9.6	10.5	9.7	11.7

TABLE 7

Plans To Stay in the Area

Years	Number	Percent
Plan to Stay Under 2 Years	13	5.9
Plan to Stay 2 to 5 Years	27	12.3
Plan to Stay 5 or More Years	179	81.7
Total	219	100.0

TABLE 8

Leaders Perception of Population Change

Population Change	Number	Percent
Growing Rapidly	26	14.2
Growing Slowly	91	49.7
Little or No Change	51	27.9
Losing Slowly	15	8.2
Losing Rapidly	0	0.0
Total	183	100.0

TABLE 9

Extent of Housing Problems

Problems	Number	Percent
Experience Frequent Problems	77	42.5
Experience Problems Fairly Often	52	28.7
Experience Occasional Problems	45	24.9
Rarely Have Problems	7	3.9
Total	181	100.0

TABLE 10

Type of Housing Problems

Type	Number	Percent
Rental Problems	33	23.2
General Lack of Housing	32	22.5
Lower Quality	22	15.5
Lack of Selection	30	21.1
High Cost	14	9.9
Other	11	7.7
Total	142	100.0

TABLE 11

Change in Property Values

Property Values	Number	Percent
Risen Substantially	163	88.1
Risen Slightly	22	11.9
No Change	0	0.0
Total	185	100.0

TABLE 12

Change in Property Value as Caused by Migrants

Cause	Number	Percent
Caused by Migrants	67	36.6
Not Caused by Migrants	87	47.5
Don't Know	29	15.8
Total	183	100.0

TABLE 13

Change in Demand on Water and Sewage Facilities

Change	Number	Percent
Substantial Increase	132	72.1
Slight Increase	34	18.6
Decrease	1	0.5
No Change	4	2.2
Don't Know	12	6.6
Total	183	100.0

TABLE 14

Change in School Enrollment

Change	Number	Percent
Substantial Increase	25	13.6
Slight Increase	90	48.9
No Change	29	15.8
Decrease	12	6.5
Don't Know	28	15.2
Total	184	100.0

TABLE 15

Change in Demand on Local Officials

Change	Number	Percent
Substantial Increase	105	57.1
Slight Increase	67	36.4
Decrease	3	1.6
No Change	1	0.5
Don't Know	8	4.3
Total	184	100.0

TABLE 16

Adequacy of Medical Facilities

Adequacy	Number	Percent
More Than Adequate	24	13.1
Adequate	73	39.9
Less Than Adequate	86	47.0
Total	183	100.0

TABLE 17

Change in Business Activity

Change	Number	Percent
Substantial Increase	58	31.4
Slight Increase	65	35.1
Little or No Increase	33	17.8
Decrease	5	2.7
Same	22	11.9
Don't Know	2	1.1
Total	185	100.0

TABLE 18

Type of Business Increase

Type	Number	Percent
Coal Mining	37	20.9
General Retail	26	14.7
Grocery Stores	25	14.1
Manufacturing	20	11.3
Restaurants	18	10.2
Banking	9	5.1
General Construction	6	3.4
Other	36	20.3
Total	177	100.0

TABLE 19

Acceptance of New People

Acceptance	Number	Percent
Accepted	112	61.2
Accepted with Reservation	67	36.6
Not Accepted	4	2.2
Total	183	100.0

TABLE 20

General Community Effects

Effect	Number	Percent
No Answer	92	48.2
No Effect	13	6.8
Little Effect	27	14.1
General Positive Effect	53	27.7
General Negative Effect	6	3.1
Total	191	100.0