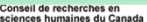The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation

Social Exclusion and Social Support in Rural Canada

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Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada   Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

•Social Exclusion in Rural Canada

•The availability of appropriate social support is critical for social inclusion. This is most important under conditions of change and stress. In order to ensure such support, therefore, we need to understand the nature of social support in rural areas, how it is used, and the conditions that facilitate or inhibit its use. This paper provides theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding those processes of social inclusion and exclusion as they are reflected in social support. Using a theoretical framework rooted in social relations and data from 1995 rural households in 20 field sites from across Canada as well as the General Social Survey 22, we examine various types of social support that are used under conditions of change, the characteristics of the households using them, and the community-level contexts that condition their use. Both policy and research implications are drawn from these results.
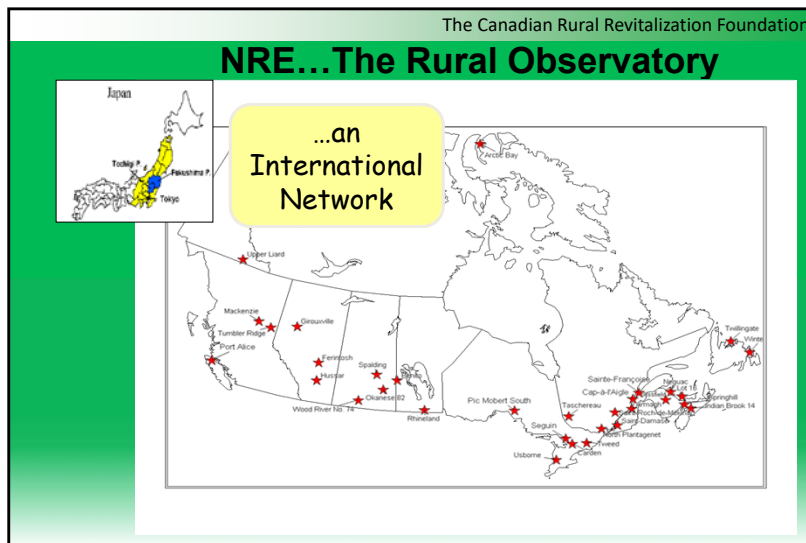
Social Inclusion and Social Support

Getting the resources and support needed – when they are needed

- Requires:
  - Accessibility
  - Capacity

•Social inclusion means being able to get the resources and support you need – when you need them.

•This means that:

•the appropriate resource, service, and/or support must be accessible at the right place and time, and

•you must have the capacity to make use of them.

•This perspective is of particular importance in rural and remote places – where the distances and low population densities make accessibility a challenge.

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**NRE…The Rural Observatory**

…an International Network

•This was one of the major preoccupations of our 11-year study involving 32 systematically selected rural sites across Canada (and 2 in Japan) – from 1997 to 2008 – the New Rural Economy Project

•Over that period of time we had about 15 researchers and their associated students working with the local people in those sites gathering information and conducting analysis at multiple levels – the households, the organizations, businesses, and networks in the local areas, the policy context in which they operated, and the extent to which they were connected to the global economy.

•An important focus was on the availability of services (formal and informal) along with the use made of those services – allowing us a unique opportunity to consider these two elements of engagement in a relatively independent fashion.

•Some of the most revealing information came from a series of questions in our household survey where we asked the respondents about the major changes that had affected their household over the last year, then followed this up with a series of questions about the most important one:

•To who did they turn to for help in meeting this change? and

•How useful or effective was the response?

•Independently, we were able to assess the services available in the region and to identify any patterns regarding the differences between the availability and use of those services.

•Many things emerged from this analysis, but one of the most interesting and relevant ones for this conference was the types and range of supports to which people turned.
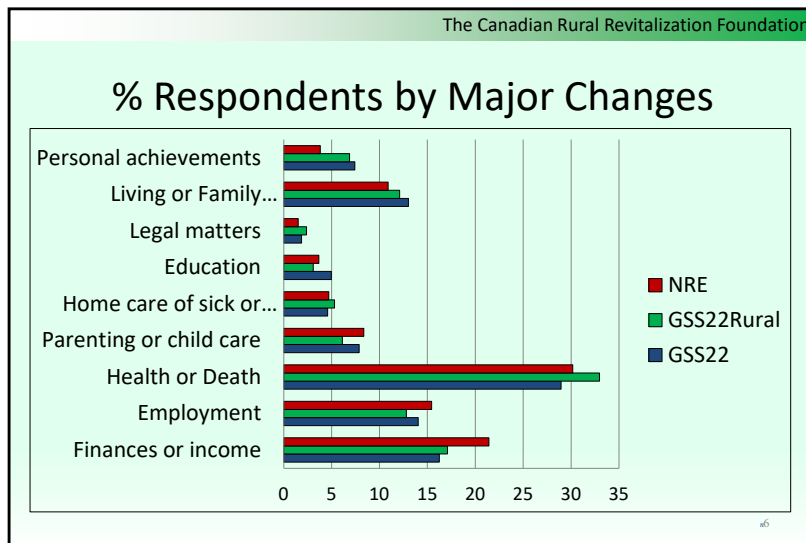
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Market-based:
Contractual, short-term, supply and demand
E.g. commerce, labour, housing, trade

Bureaucratic-based:
Rationalized roles, principles
E.g. government, law, corporations

Associative-based:
Shared interests
E.g. recreation, charity, religious groups

Communal-based:
Generalized reciprocity, identity, birth
E.g. families, cultural groups, gangs

• As a result of this research we have identified four very general types of such normative structures.
   • The formal and informal rules, guidelines, assumed ways of behaving that guide the action of people in those networks: the norms by which people interact and co-ordinate their interaction.
   • It is not only important who you know – but what you assume and can assume about their behaviour, dependability, and expectations of you – the basic ingredients in trust.
• These norms can operate together, but one or the other tends to predominate in a specific situation.
• (S) Market-based norms
   • Based on contractual relations – usually short term, exchange oriented, guided by supply and demand
      • Predominate in commercial interactions, housing markets, job markets, and all levels of trade relations
      • Access to resources and support services is conditioned by ones ability to trade and exchange
• (S) Bureaucratic-based norms
   • Classic rational-legal relations as articulated by Weber
   • Guided by general principles and interlocking roles as reflected in by-laws and organigrams.
      • Predominate in corporations, public institutions, many NGOs
   • Access to resources and support services is made according to one's assigned role and status (within and external to the organization)
      • If you meet the criteria (e.g. age class), you gain access to the resources – so long as you know the criteria and how to access them
• (S) Associative-based norms
   • People come together and organize their activities around a common interest
   • Participate so long as this interest is being served – or is likely to be achieved
      • Predominate in voluntary organizations, social action groups, emergency responses
   • Access to resources and services under these normative systems is according to one's commitment to and support for the common interest
• (S) Communal-based norms
   • People organize their behaviour with respect to family, ethnic, or other complex loyalties
   • Inclusion and exclusion usually guided by ascribed characteristics or strong identities
   • Don't have the single-focus outcomes as found in associative-based relations
      • Predominate in families, gangs, cults, etc.
   • Access to resources and services according to identity (often ascribed) and loyalty
• All forms are necessary in a complex, changing environment - The more agile a group, household, or community is in being able to use all systems, the greater will be their capacity to access resources or support - especially under conditions of change. Each of them forms a basis for social supports and social inclusion or exclusion.
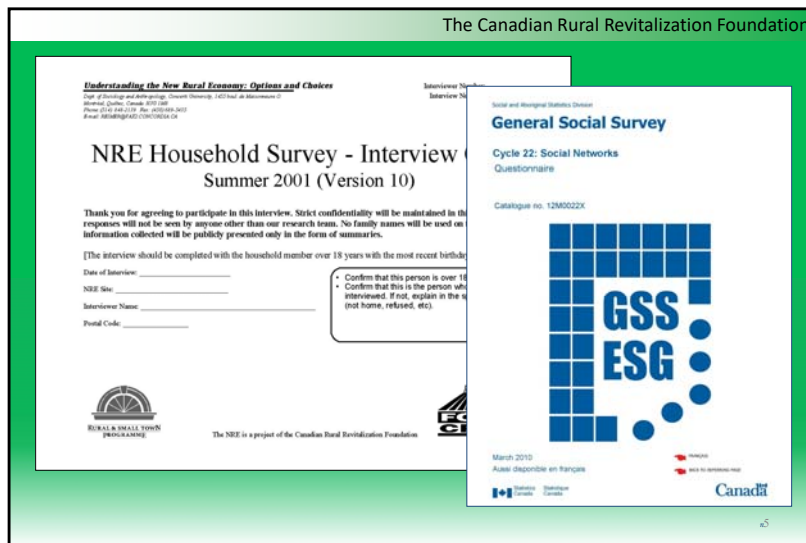
•Our analysis using this framework has served us well in understanding the nature and processes involved in social support, engagement, and the contextual importance of social capital.

•We have found, for example:

•That the relative capacities in the use of the various types of normative systems varies considerably by location, connection to the global economy, local institutional capacity, and distance from urban regions

•That much of the available social capital is not used, and

•Skills and capacity for operating in one of these normative systems can compensate under some conditions for the lack of skills and capacity in others.

•We were, therefore, very pleased when the authors of the GSS Cycle 22 (on Social Networks – 2008) decided to include a module in the national survey that essentially replicated the series of questions from our household study regarding major changes experienced in the household and the people, organizations, groups, or networks to who one turned for support.

•This nicely complemented our work since it allowed us to compare our case study information with which we were working to the national sample – of both rural and urban places across the country.

•I have reported elsewhere on a more methodological comparison of these two surveys – including the challenges they present – but I will focus here on the more substantive results as they apply to social support and social exclusion.

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% Respondents by Major Changes

(Chart categories: Personal achievements, Living or Family…, Legal matters, Education, Home care of sick or…, Parenting or child care, Health or Death, Employment, Finances or income; legend: NRE, GSS22Rural, GSS22; axis 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35)

•This table provides the distribution of use among the 9 generic types of changes common to both the NRE and GSS surveys.

  •Categories developed from open-ended materials in the NRE

  •GSS22 replicated these with the explicit inclusion of "death" as a health-related factor

  •Note that the method of solicitation of information was different

    •NRE – face-to-face open ended interviews with probes, then post-coding

    •GSS – telephone with explicit questions about each type of change and possible source of support

•The blue bars represent the % of GSS respondents who identified the various changes listed on the left hand side of the graph.

•Reasonably good match between the 2 surveys.

  •The NRE survey results are slightly higher on Finances or income changes.

  •It is also lower than the GSS results on both the Living or family and Personal achievements.

•Not too much difference when we excluded respondents from CMA and CA locations.

  •We see slight increases in health or death changes from the full GSS responses.

•Promising comparisons overall. Some indications that the two surveys are sensitive to similar things.

•Substantively:

  •Health (including death) changes are the greatest % of changes among the types we have identified.

  •Finances or income second

  •Employment third

% Respondents by Type of Support
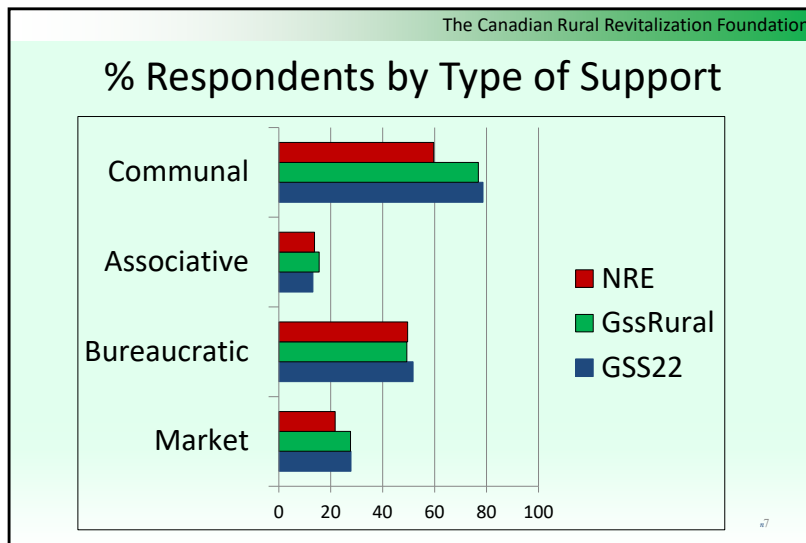
•When we examined the various types of support used, we find the following results.

•There is a relatively high use of communal-based types of support: family and close friends

•Bureaucratic sources are second – in most cases government services at all levels: municipal, regional, provincial, national

•What was most interesting in our analysis, however, was the ways in which these various types of social supports were used in combination.
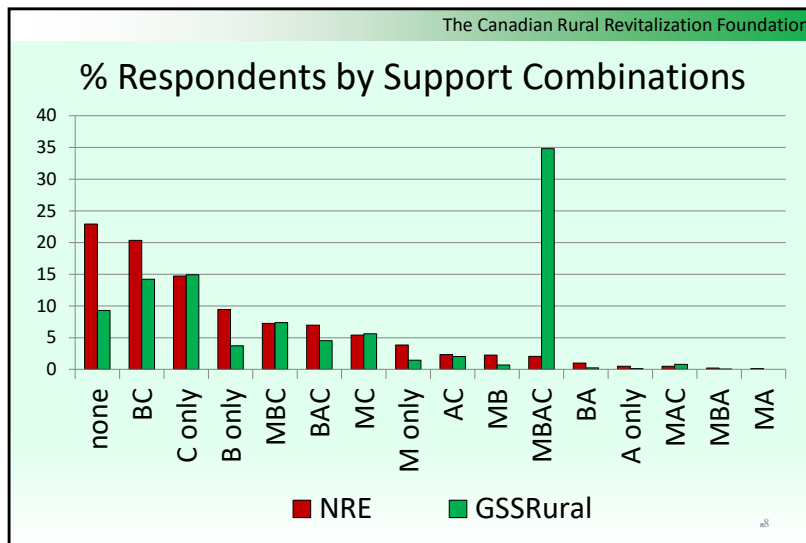
•Here we have a distribution reflecting the way in which multiple types of support systems are used by the respondents in the NRE and GSS Rural survey.

•First noticeable thing about this graph is the high % of respondents who indicated they used all 4 types of supports together – in the GSS survey

  •Quite sure the difference between the NRE and GSS results on this is an artifact of the different ways in which the two surveys were administered: NRE open-ended and GSS – took respondents through all options.

  •Reinforced by the relatively low level of people in the GSS survey who reported "None" when asked about supports used.

•Overall – the results reflect a pattern in the use of social supports that is found in most of this analysis:

  •The various normative systems of social support are primarily used in combination

  •E.g. BC = Bureaucratic and communal. Accessing government and other institutional supports is often more than just going to the doctor or license bureau.

    •It involves arranging for someone to look after the kids, drive you to the hospital, or helping you find the telephone number on the web.

    •These results are consistent with the NRE analysis showing how much of the available social capital in our rural sites is unused for some people since they do not have the right combination of supports at the appropriate time.

% Respondents by Type of Change and Support
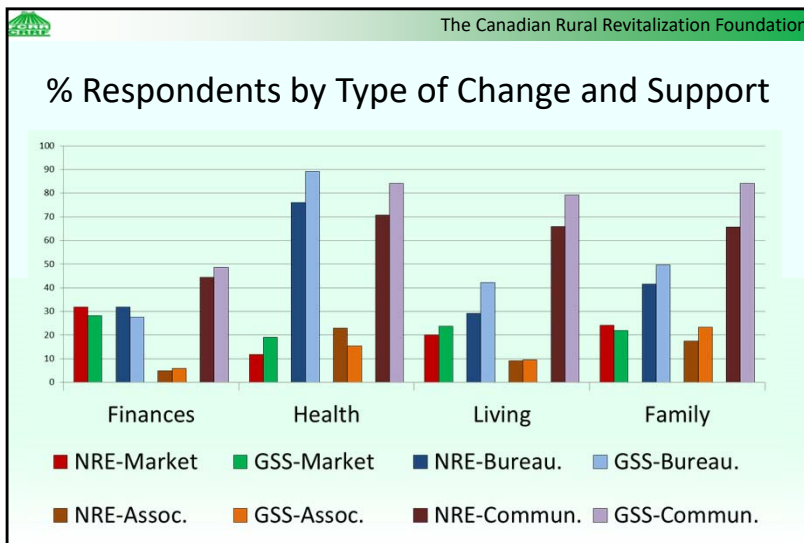
•We can see patterns of use of the different types of social support when we look at the types of change considered (this graph shows the 4 most frequent types of changes)

•We see that communal-based supports show the highest % of use across the various types – but beyond that the relative use of other types of support vary

•Finances: Market and Bureaucratic-based supports are used about the same level

•Health, Living, and Family: Bureaucratic-based supports are the second most frequent type of support used

•Associative-based supports are particularly important for Health and Family-related changes

% Respondents by Combinations and Types of Change GSS22 – Rural Only
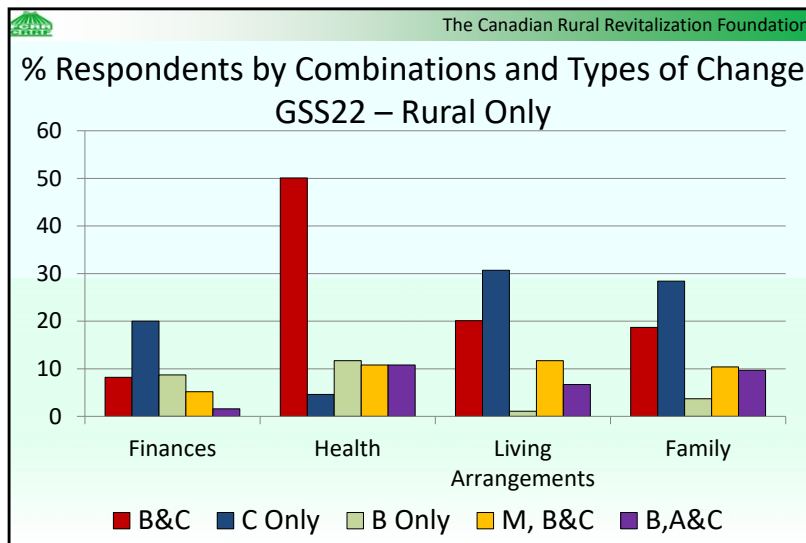
•The type of change is also related to the combinations of types of support we examined earlier.

•Family and close friends alone are important for Finances, Living arrangements, and Family

•But most of the others are used in combination

  •Especially apparent for changes in health, where bureaucratic and communal are most often used together

    •Bureaucratic alone is used by only about 10% of the respondents for health and finance changes

  •As with the general analysis – associative-based social support is most often used in combination – in this case with bureaucratic and communal-based supports

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Results of Logistic Analysis

	Market	Bureaucratic	Associative	Communal
Single Parents	Less	Less		More
Low Income	Less		More	
Low education	Less	Less	More	
Unemployed	Less	More	Mixed	More
Rural			More	

•Finally, we wanted to examine the types of households and individuals that were most likely to use the various types of social support.

•We started with some of the most vulnerable types of households – as represented in the general literature

•Single parents, the poor, less educated, the unemployed, and rural/urban locations

•Since we expected these various characteristics to be interdependent we decided to conduct binary logistic regression to examine the types of household using or not using the 4 types of social support.

•They were run separately with the NRE and GSS data. The rural/urban difference was entered in each model as a control.

•Single parents: Both men and women parents were less likely to use market and bureaucratic-based social supports than non-single-parents – and more likely to use communal-based ones.

•Low Income, Low education, Unemployed: less likely to use market-based social supports and generally more likely to use Associative-based ones.

•Mixed cell is there since the NRE data indicates they are more likely to use associative-based supports, but GSS data suggests they are less likely to use them.

•May reflect a difference in the 2 survey approaches to the identification of respondents and unemployment – and our attempt to match the way in which they were measured.

•NRE – employed = respondent worked full time on a yearly or seasonal basis

•GSS – employed = respondent worked less than 17 weeks over the last year

•Rural respondents more likely to use associative-based supports than non-rural

•NRE – all rural (<10,000 pop)

•GSS – Non CMA/CA (very rough indicator)

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Summary: NRE and GSS Surveys

- Types of changes: similar
- Types of supports: similar
- Types of supports are used in combination
- Opportunities for answering questions
  - Which systems are most effective?
  - How are the systems compatible?
  - How can we improve the opportunities for collaboration?

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•Conclusions

•General results support the value of considering the sources of social support as an element of social inclusion and exclusion

   •They also support the elaboration of those sources, the normative structures involved, and the specific 4-fold distinctions that we have been making.

•More specifically they point to the way in which the different types of vulnerable populations make differential use of the various sources of social support – characteristics that seem independent of the rural-urban distinction

•They also highlight the special importance of associative-based supports in rural areas – something that is supported by previous work on voluntary associations and our own hypotheses about the relative capacity of rural vs. urban people to work with these various normative systems.

   •Rural people especially familiar/adept with associative and communal-based ones

   •As market and bureaucratic norms have become more important in contemporary society, rural people have been at a disadvantage until they develop their skills in these systems.

•They also suggest some important lessons for policy-makers

   •Providing government services alone doesn't always mean people will use them – or that all types of people will use them

   •Attention must be given to the other types of supports (or lack of supports) that are available – making it possible to recognize and access the government services – especially family and close friends

      •This may mean providing facilities or resources that can facilitate family supports (live-in support, day care, covering travel expenses)

      •It may mean tailoring the bureaucratic-based services to the norms and networks of the other systems

         •Working with voluntary groups without requiring they pay the extra cost of meeting accountability and fairness criteria, for example

         •Designing programs that are family-friendly and family-supportive – even where they may not have immediate family visibility (e.g. business or economic objectives)

•For researchers

   •More sophisticated understanding of social capital, networks, and norms – move beyond the reliance on participation in voluntary associations, political action, or trust.

   •Redo this analysis with more sensitive indicators of location (e.g. GSS postal codes)

   •What are the relationships among competencies in the various forms of social support/capital?

   •Can we build capacity in M & B through A & C? We have examples but need followup confirmation and analysis.

   •Which strategies are best for meeting our desire for greater social inclusion?